SUBVERTING ISLAM:

The Role of Orientalist Centres

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bismi-llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
THE MERCIFUL THE COMPASSIONATE

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INTRODUCTION

These essays on the subversion of Islam by Western Orientalists and their Muslim agents and disciples were originally published separately in Arabic in various journals. They are presented here in a single volume and in English to make the important reflections they contain more accessible to a wider audience. The essays expose those Muslim scholars (known as court scholars or 'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān) who are helping the Orientalists in their attempts to enfeeble Islam as a comprehensive way of life. The author has written plain words of truth to put up against their falsehood and deceit.

The issues he raises cannot be set aside as something of limited concern only for academics. It is a matter of public record that the Muslim scholars who encourage collaboration with Orientalists are the same men who sought to legitimise the demolition of Iraq by Western military powers operating from the holy lands of Islam; and they are the same ones who maintain a public silence about the continuing Western military presence in the Gulf states, and about the wars currently being waged against Muslims in Bosnia, in Kashmir, in Burma, in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, indeed in any and every place where Muslims dare to be identified as Muslims.

The arguments presented here are based upon unambiguous commands and principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and, in that respect, constitute a proof against the programme of the Orientalists and their Muslim agents to make the Qur'ān and Sunnah appear irrelevant and ineffective. The words of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have a precise bearing upon the current events recounted here, and contain very clear directions about how Muslims should respond. In addition, therefore, to exposing the malice of those who wish to destroy Islam as a way of life and the hypocrisy of those who (while claiming to be scholars in the service of Islam) are actively working alongside them, the essays may serve this second purpose:

There are many sincere Muslims who are bewildered and

somewhat beaten down under the sheer scale, force and persistence of the Western hostility toward Islam, so that, when they turn to the Qur'ān, they turn to it for solace, for resonant, beautiful expression of the values and narratives they dearly cherish. Certainly the Qur'ān is Divine mercy, a means of healing for the hearts and minds of the believers. But the Qur'ān is also a *guidance*. Muslims in general have, for a variety of reasons, come to lose the habit of reading the Qur'ān as a guide to present action, as a means to understand present realities, and a resource by which to shape a coherent strategy of response, relevant and appropriate to those realities. It is our hope, therefore, that readers will take away from this small volume not only information and argument about developments in the world of scholarship which are cause for great concern, but also an understanding of how to apply themselves to the Qur'ān and Sunnah so that they become *active* in their effort to make the guidance of Islam a reality in their lives.

CHAPTER 1

CULTURAL BETRAYAL: MUSLIM COLLABORATION WITH WESTERN ORIENTALISTS

Orientalism or the Western study of Islam began in medieval Europe and has continued into modern times. Whoever knows its long history will recognise in it the influence of the mentality of the Crusades and the rancour of the Jews against Islam. It soon becomes clear that the Orientalists are networks of Christians and Jews who, behind the facade of academic institutions and the pretence of scholarly curiosity and objectivity, have been engaged in an unrelenting effort to distort Islam in all its aspects - Qur'ān, Sunnah, *'Aqīdah* (creed), Sharī'ah (law), and the whole culture and civilisation derived from them.

A number of Western scholars, after their conversion to Islam, have willingly exposed the prejudices of the Orientalists, their lack of honesty and objectivity and, therefore, their lack of fitness to study Islam. An outstanding and forceful example is Muḥammad 'Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss) who wrote in his chapter on 'The Shadow of the Crusades':

> The Greeks and the Romans regarded only themselves as 'civilised', while everything foreign, and particularly everything living to the east of the Mediterranean Sea, bore the label 'barbarian'. Since that time the Occidentals believe that their racial superiority over the rest of mankind is a matter of fact; and the more or less pronounced contempt of non-European races and nations is one of the standing features of Western civilisation.
>
> This alone, however, is not enough to explain its feelings as regards Islam. Here, and here alone, the Western attitude is not one of indifferent dislike as in the case of all other 'foreign' religions and cultures; it is one of deep-rooted and almost fanatical aversion;

and it is not only intellectual, but bears an intensely emotional tint. Europe may not accept the doctrines of Buddhist or Hindu philosophy, but it will always preserve a balanced, reflective attitude of mind with respect to those systems. As soon, however, as it turns towards Islam the balance is disturbed and an emotional bias creeps in. With very few exceptions, even the most eminent of European orientalists are guilty of an unscientific partiality in their writings on Islam. In their writings it almost appears as if Islam could not be treated as a mere object of scientific research, but as an accused standing before his judges... All in all, the technique of the deductions and conclusions adopted by most of the European orientalists reminds us of the proceedings of those notorious Courts of the Inquisition... in the Middle Ages: that is to say, they hardly ever investigate facts with an open mind, but start, almost in every case, from a foregone conclusion dictated by prejudice. They select the evidence according to the conclusion they *a priori* intend to reach. Where an arbitrary selection of witnesses is impossible, they cut parts of the evidence of the available ones out of the context, or 'interpret' their statements in a spirit of unscientific malevolence, without attributing any weight to the presentation of the case by the other party, that is, the Muslim themselves.

The result of such a procedure is the strangely distorted picture of Islam and things Islamic that faces us in the orientalist literature of the West. This distortion is not confined to one country: it is to be found in England and in Germany, in Russia and in France, in Italy and in Holland - in short wherever European orientalists turn their eyes on Islam.'[1]

This wilful Orientalist distortion clearly has two main objectives. Firstly, to create revulsion against Islam in the hearts and minds of non-Muslims. Secondly, to embarrass

[1] Islam at the Crossroads, Arafat Publications, Lahore, 1934, repr. 1974, ch 3, pp. 62-4.

Muslims themselves about their beliefs, traditions and history, so as to cause them to doubt and, ultimately, to apostasies:

> *Many of the People of the Book want to make you unbelievers after you have believed, through the envy from their own selves, and after the truth has been made clear to them....* (*al-Baqarah*, 2.109)

The history of Orientalism shows that it was closely connected with the needs and purposes of colonialism and with Christian missionary ambitions. That connection remains. It has now become a part of the geo-political strategies of Western governments and their intelligence services.

Western study of Islam as a formal discipline has long been established in specialist faculties called 'Oriental Institutes', the best known founded as long ago as the early and mid-eighteenth century. They have since spread much further and are now called 'centres' for 'Islamic studies'. The change of name is certainly intended to deceive Muslims who, naturally enough, would distrust the Oriental Institutes. The purposes (and prejudices) of Orientalism are now offered as 'Islamic studies'; and the purposes of Christian missions are now presented as 'Christian-Muslim relations'. In the United Kingdom, examples of the former are centres in Oxford, Exeter and Wales; and of the latter Selly Oak College in Birmingham and in the USA, the Holy Cross College in New York.

It is no coincidence that such centres should have sprung up in the early or mid-eighties. They are part of the long-term strategy of response to the revival of Islam that intensified around the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Centres for so-called 'Islamic studies' now exist in the prestigious academic settings of the universities of Harvard, Princeton, New York, Oxford, Cambridge and Paris. Many of them are, in significant measure, financed, and also very directly patronised, sponsored and supported by Arab governments, especially the Saudis. The support from Arab governments includes the appointment to the boards of these centres of *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* ('court scholars') in the role of 'trustees' or 'consultants'. These Muslim names help to legitimise the 'Islamic studies' and so deceive the Muslims further. Examples of such names are: ʿAbdullāh Naṣeef, ʿAbdullāh al-Turkī, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī,

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Ja'afar Sheikh Idris - each of whom works with the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' either as a trustee or as a consultant or both.

In these centres, atheist, Christian and Jewish scholars have at least an equal, usually greater, authority than Muslim scholars in the choice and framing of topics for research in Islamic history and civilisation and in the teaching of Islam. The 'court scholars' are rarely, if ever, present in the centres, attending only ceremonial meetings, at most once a year: they do not supervise or monitor or direct or decide anything. Their only job is to provide a facade of legitimacy and to establish the fact of collaboration.

How should we judge this collaboration with Orientalists otherwise than as the Qur'ān *commands* us to judge?

One of the duties of Muslim scholars is to invite non-Muslims, especially the People of the Book, to Islam; not to work alongside them in denigrating Islam:

> *Say: 'O People of the Book, come to an agreement between us and you - that we shall worship none except Allah, and that we shall associate no partner with Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah.' Then, if they turn away, then say: 'Be witnesses that we are Muslims [those who have surrendered to Allah].* ('Āla-'Imrān, 3.64)

To collaborate with Orientalists is, in practice, to *ally* with them, which is the opposite of what the Qur'ān commands. But why do we call such collaboration an *alliance?* Because it takes the form of material and moral assistance to the activities of the Orientalists for their purposes. This helps to sustain their attack on Islam and to continue their ridicule of the Qur'ān and the Prophet, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam:*

> *Those who choose unbelievers for their allies instead of believers - do they look for power at their hands? Surely, all power belongs to Allah.*
>
> *He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the revelations of Allah rejected and made fun of, you should not sit with them until they are in some other conversation. For surely, if you [did stay with them] you would be like them...* (an-Nisā', 4.139-40)
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> *O believers, do not take the Jews and Christians for allies. They are allies of each other. He among you who takes them for allies is of them [has become one of them]. Indeed, Allah does not guide those who do wrong.*
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> (al-Mā'idah, 5.51)
>
> *O believers, do not choose My enemy and your enemy for allies. Do you offer them alliance when they disbelieve in the truth that has come to you, [who were] expelling the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord? [Do not do so] if you have come forward to strive in My way and to seek My pleasure. Do you in secret show them friendship when I am perfectly aware of what you keep secret and what you make public? And whoever among you does this, truly he has strayed from the right path.*
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> *If they have the upper hand over you [in your affairs] they will be your enemies, and stretch out their hands and their tongues toward you with evil [purpose] - and they yearn that you should disbelieve.*
> (al-Mumtaḥinah, 60.1-2)

All these verses give very clear reasons why Muslims should not make alliances with non-Muslims:

1. Their intense enmity to Islam.
2. Their being allies of one another against Islam and the Muslims (- should we be blind to what is being done in Palestine, in Bosnia, in Kashmir, in many other Indian states, in Burma, in Central Asia, in the Philippines, not to mention the oppression of the believers by the Western allies : the Arab rulers in the very heartlands of Islam).
3. Their encouraging and inspiring ridicule of the verses of the Qur'ān and of the Messenger of Allah, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam* (- of which the satanic novel by Salman Rushdie is but a recent and particularly scandalous example).
4. Their yearning for the Muslims to become like them, first

in way of life, then in belief or lack of it: *They yearn that you should disbelieve just as they disbelieve, so that you may be on the same level (as them). So do not choose your allies among them... (an-Nisā'*, 4.89).

Let us state the matter plainly:

Alliance with the enemies of Islam is forbidden. Also forbidden is receiving Islam from them: Muslims may not learn Islam from non-Muslims. How should believers receive Islam from those who not only disbelieve in Islam but are hostile to it? How should they receive right guidance from those who are misguided?

Again, the Qur'ān is very clear:

> *...they have no knowledge of it. They follow only a conjecture, and surely a conjecture can never take the place of the truth.*
>
> *So avoid him who runs from the remembrance of Us and who desires only the life of the world.*
>
> *That is the sum total of their knowledge. Surely your Lord is best aware of him who strays, and He is best aware of him who goes right.*
>
> (*an-Najm*, 53.28-30)

And there are clear 'Aḥādīth on the matter. For example:

> Do not ask the People of the Book about anything because they cannot guide you while they are themselves misguided. If you take from them you will either believe what is false or deny what is true. By Allah, if Mūsā [*'alaihi s-salām*] were living among you now, he would not be permitted [by Allah] to do otherwise than follow me. (al-Hāfiz 'Abū Ya'lā)

It is very clear from the texts I have quoted that this matter does not in any way come within the sphere of *ijtihād* (individual judgement). Indeed, at no time in Muslim history has any Muslim scholar ever allowed (or ever tried to legitimise) non-Muslims teaching Islam. There is no precedent for what the modern *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* are doing and claiming to do as *mujtahids* (those qualified to give judgements). I repeat, the Qur'ān and Sunnah are explicit on this matter - there is no room for *ijtihād* on it, not even from a qualified individual.

Refusing to work with the People of the Book in the study of Islam is, it is argued, an expression of intolerance when, as we all know, Islam requires Muslims to be tolerant. But this argument is quite false and based upon a dishonest confusion between tolerating the People of the Book and being loyal to their purposes. The difference is one that everyone readily understands in practice. It has been explained fully by Sayyid Qutb in his commentary on the relevant verse, quoted above (*al-Mā'idah*, 5.51):

> *O believers, do not take the Jews and Christians for allies. They are allies of each other. He among you who takes them for allies is of them [has become one of them]. Indeed, Allah does not guide those who do wrong.*
>
> A Muslim is required to be tolerant of the People of the Book, but he is forbidden to give them loyalty, that is, to help them as allies. The Muslim's way of supporting his religion and of making a reality of its unique order (*niẓām*) cannot be harmonised with the way of the People of the Book. No matter how much friendship a Muslim shows them, he will never get their approval or acceptance for him to remain a Muslim or to make a reality of the Islamic order. He will never prevent them from allying with each other in war and conspiracy against Islam. It is a naive heedlessness which thinks that they and we are travelling the same road, especially in the face of atheism, because when the battle is against Islam they stand alongside the atheists...
>
> The People of the Book are like the Jews [in Madīnah] who used to describe the *mushrikīn* (polytheists) as better guided than the Muslims - *And they say to the unbelievers: 'These [the idolaters] are more rightly guided than the believers'* (*an-Nisā'*, 4.51) - and who used to help the *Mushrikīn* against the Muslim community in Madīnah and indeed gave them substantial assistance. The People of the Book

are those who waged the Crusades against the Muslims for two centuries. It is they who committed the atrocities in al-Andalus (Spain). It is they who, in collaboration with atheist Communists, made the Arab Muslims refugees in Palestine and installed the Jews in their place. Again, it is they who have driven the Muslims from their homes in Abyssinia, Eretria, Somalia, Algeria [and the list has grown very considerably since Sayyid Qutb wrote these words]. And they are also co-operating with atheists and idol-worshippers against the Muslims in Yugoslavia, China, Turkestan, India and in every place... ... ...

Those [Muslims] who, in the name of seeking some "rapprochement" between the followers of the revealed religions, have sought to blur the decisive difference between being tolerant with them and being their loyal allies, are in error. They are in error both in their understanding of the meaning of the *dīn* and in their understanding of the meaning of tolerance. For, the one true revelation is the last [namely, Islam], and tolerance is in personal interrelations, not in matters of faith (*ʿAqīdah*) nor in social-political order. The tolerance of Islam is also expressed in the Muslims' not coercing them to accept Islam [that is, in leaving them to follow their *dīn*]: *The religion with Allah is al-Islam. Those who received the scripture [before] differed only after knowledge came to them, through transgression of their own. Whoever disbelieves in the revelations of Allah: He is swift in reckoning!* (*ʾĀla-ʿImrān*, 3.19). The only *dīn* accepted by Allah is Islam. Whoever accepts a religion other than Islam will not be accepted and he will be lost in the life to come: *And whoever seeks a religion other than al-Islam, it will not be accepted from him. and he will be a loser in the hereafter* (*ʾĀla-ʿImrān*, 3.85).[2]

2 Fī ẓilāl al-Qurʾān, 12th edn, Beirut, 1986, vol.2, p.910.

CHAPTER 2

THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR 'ISLAMIC STUDIES'

1 THE CENTRE AND WHY IT EXISTS

Since the very beginning of the Islamic revival around the turn of the century, the Orientalists have (without ever changing their objectives) been re-thinking their general approach and adjusting their tactics. One of the new tactics has been to persuade certain of their Muslim students to act as their agents, especially in Islamic countries - men like Taha Hussein and ʿAli ʿAbdur-Rāziq in Egypt. The former denied the truth of the Qurʾān when, in his work on pre-Islamic Arabic poetry,[3] he denied the truth of the Qurʾān's account of the Prophets ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIsmāʿīl, *ʿalaihima s-salām*. That particular point (as well as the arguments and purpose that go with it) is one specifically taught by Orientalist scholars like Margoliouth, Hurgronje and others. 'Ali 'Abdur-Raziq, in his work on Islam and the principles of governance,[4] argued that Islam is merely a cult and has no political order at all. The purpose of this familiar and patently absurd thesis was to persuade Muslims, through a nominally Muslim scholar, that they could accept the rule over them by any government, even one hostile to Islam and its Sharīʿah (law).

Having planted such thoughts into the minds of Muslims, the Orientalists then proceed to spread them by praising the work of Muslims who 'accept' those thoughts and recommending it to subsequent generations; while, at the same time, not mentioning and not recommending the work of those truly Muslim scholars who totally reject the arguments of Taha Hussein and 'Ali 'Abdur-Raziq. Where not-mentioning and not-recommending could not succeed - for example, with such well-known writers as Sayyid Qutb or, in the Indian

3 Fī al-Shiʿiri al-Jāhiliyy, 1st edn, Cairo, 1926, pp. 26-9.

4 Al-Islam wa ʾUṣūl al-Ḥukm, 3rd edn, Cairo, 1925, pp. 69ff.

subcontinent, al-Mawdūdī - the Orientalists were obliged to try and marginalise and vilify their work as 'extremist', 'fanatic', 'fundamentalist', and so on.

Broadly speaking, a twin-track strategy is operated - to give importance to those Muslims who collaborate with the Orientalists' programme, and to attach opprobrium to those who reject it. This means according the authority and prestige of Western scholarship to Muslims who agree with Western purposes, and the neglect or contempt of Western scholarship to those Muslims who refuse Western purposes. Prestige and funds are allowed to the former and denied to the latter.

A more recent extension of this strategy is the establishment in the West of new centres for Orientalist studies and calling them centres for 'Islamic studies'. The intention is to attract Muslim scholars to co-operate with them in these centres - in order to legitimise their approach and, more important, to gain for them credibility in Muslim eyes as scholars of Islam. But changing the name does not change the substance of what is re-named.

Any genuinely Islamic study of Islam has the following minimal initial conditions - and I stress *minimal* conditions:

1 to study Islam as a revealed religion, (this means to study it as the truth from Allah whose authority is not to be challenged but to be understood and therefore, confessed intelligently.)
2 to take Islam from its own original and authentic sources (i.e., the Qur'ān and Sunnah).
3 to take it as both knowledge and practice; (meaning that the fruits of study are not intended as academic pastime, nor is its immediate purpose the display of work in a library or museum; rather, the aim is to improve and extend consciousness of Allah and to inform submission to His Will.)
4 to take it from qualified Muslim scholars. (The qualifications in question are *'īmān* (faith), *'ilm* (knowledge) and *taqwā* (fear of Allah).)

There are other conditions, also important, but these are the barest minimum. Even a passing acquaintance with modern (i.e. post-Enlightenment) Western tradition tells us that its minimum conditions for the study of Islam are the exact opposite in every case:

1 Western scholars of Islam must not accept that Islam is a revealed religion. Their work will be condemned as unacademic if they regard the Qur'ān as the Word of Allah.
2 They must not take Islam from its own sources. On the contrary, they must specifically look outside those sources in order to get a 'true' picture. Precisely because the Orientalists regard Qur'ān and Sunnah as the Islamic equivalent of what Christians call 'canonical', these sources must be seen as the *least* reliable, and others must be preferred in cases of conflict.
3 They must not, not under any circumstances, *promote* Islam as a way of life or even of belief. It must be seen as a thing of the past in terms relevant for the discipline of the inquirer - anthropology, sociology, philology or history or whatever. The result of study must be works that can be shelved in the libraries of universities, government ministries or Christian missions.
4 They must not have a personal commitment to Islam. Being Muslim is a serious handicap and would cast grave doubt on their work. While Christian and Jewish accounts of Islam (and also of Christianity and Judaism) are trustworthy; Muslim accounts of Islam (and, of course, of Christianity or Judaism) are suspect. Any Muslims who find themselves working in a Western academic environment must learn to suspend their beliefs while they study Islam.

It is obvious that Orientalists regard the Qur'ān not as Divinely revealed, but as a humanly inspired book put out by the Messenger, working alone or with the help of others, whose identity is obscure. They do not regard the Messenger, *salla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, even as a Messenger, let alone as the last. The best they can manage is to say he was a great leader, or great social reformer or something of this kind - but even then only in relation to his time and place, meaning that his greatness is an academic matter, having no relevance now.

If only for this one reason, the Orientalists' studies of Islam cannot be accepted. But bearing in mind also their historical prejudices, we can only conclude that they are not qualified to

teach Islam, nor is anyone else qualified to do so who shares their manners and traditions and their conditions for judging the truth - *regardless* of whether or not that individual is presented as a believing Muslim. By all means, Muslims may, they even should, study the Orientalists' writings - how else can they be informed enough to refute them forcefully? And refutation and rebuttal can by no means be confused with condoning, with aiding and abetting, the Orientalists' work, for the sake of their approval or their grudging acknowledgement that Muslims too should be allowed to think and write about themselves.

That said, we can turn now to a specific case, the recently set up Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies', whose new official patron, as proudly announced by the Centres own Newsletter, is the future head of the Church of England, Charles, the Prince of Wales, and whose principal financier is the Saudi royal family. What are the aims of this institution? It must have aims distinct from the long-established and well-staffed 'Islam' department of Oxford University's Oriental Institute. This is how the spokesman of the Centre explained its objectives when questioned about them:

> ...to produce books and research which can be consulted as published sources, written either from an Islamic point of view or from a moderate non-Islamic point of view. It is therefore natural for the Centre to open the pages of its journal [i.e. the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, published by the Oxford University Press] to whoever wants to write an academic essay or article of high standard, even if that essay or article should be in conflict with the Islamic point of view - because to do so is not only a part of academic freedom but also a part of the substance of Islam itself, as Muslims have [i.e. in their past history] had dialogue and public discussion with their opponents/followers of other religions.[5]

This statement contains a number of very misleading and deceptive propositions:

1 To offer the writings of non-Muslims as written sources to be consulted about Islam goes against the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the consensus of Muslim scholars throughout Islamic history.

2 To divide the writings of non-Muslims into 'moderate' and non-'moderate' has never been recognised in Islam in a way that would authorise a non-Muslim to teach Islam to Muslims (or, indeed, non-Muslims), no matter how 'moderate'. (Who is permitted to teach Islam was explained earlier.)

3 The distinction of moderate and non-moderate is a specious one. What 'moderate' actually means is that whatever is cruelly insulting to Muslim belief and sensibilities is expressed in a form that promises to be less cruel, though substance and content remain. For example, in mediaeval times, it was required as a proof of Christian allegiance to condemn the Prophet Muḥammad, *salla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, as an impostor and liar who deliberately deceived in order to obtain power over the minds of his followers. The 'moderate' version of this proof of Christian allegiance is exemplified by Rev Montgomery Watt,[6] whose biographical studies of the Prophet state that he was most probably *not* a liar or an impostor - no, but the revelation he received came from 'the creative imagination', a disturbed mental state. The implication is that he did not deceive others intentionally, he was self-deceived. The consequence for Muslims of either position, the moderate or the non-moderate, is the same: the authenticity of the Qur'ān is condemned in terms which are calculated, by Watt, not only to insult the Muslims' beliefs but also their intelligence. He says explicitly that 'not ... all the Qur'ānic ideas are true and sound', i.e. that the Qur'ān contains falsehood. Further, since, according to Watt, 'the creative imagination' can be for good or evil, he thinks it quite proper to clarify his meaning by this comparison: 'In Adolph Hitler, the creative imagination was well-developed, and his ideas had wide appeal, but it is usually held that he was neurotic and that those Germans who followed him most devotedly

[5] Muhammad al-Najafi, article in al-Hilāl ad-Dawlī, 16.6.1991, p.4.

[6] For official Saudi recognition of Watt as someone suitable for Muslim scholars to work with, see below, p.38.

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became infected by his neurosis.'[7] What that comparison means for the readers' estimate of the Prophet, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, and of his Companions, is as obvious as its intention is evil.

But it is best to judge the intentions of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' by its productions, and not merely by the words in which those intentions are so ineptly disguised by its spokesman. We shall look briefly at actual writings which the Centre, using the resources of Muslims, has put forward in its first major production, the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, as published work for Muslims to consult about Islam and Islamic history and civilisation.

2 The Centre's *Journal of Islamic Studies*

The difference between form and content

In contrast to an individual book or article, a journal is like an institution. It has a character and function independent of the particular contents of any single volume or any single element of those contents. It is necessary, therefore, to give separate and fuller consideration to 'form' than to 'content'.

The *'form'* of the Journal

The first double-volume of the *Journal* is plainly intended to

[7] *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p.239. See also Watt's *The Islamic Revelation in the Modern World*, Edinburgh University Press, 1969, pp. 190-1. (The allusion to Hitler is probably remembered by Watt from the writings of the early theologian, Karl Barth, who used it, so to speak, the other way round: Barth sought to whip up hatred for Nazism by comparing it with Islam - knowing with certainty that his European readers, brought up for centuries upon an uninformed, unreflecting hatred of Islam and its Prophet could not possibly disagree with him: 'Where it [Nazism] meets with resistance, it can only crush and kill - with the might and right which belongs to Divinity! Islam of old as we know proceeded in this way. It is impossible to understand National Socialism unless we see it in fact as a *new Islam*, its myth as a new Allah, and Hitler as this new Allah's prophet' (Karl Barth: *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1939, p.40).)

declare the intentions of the Centre, to define the tone, the academic space, which the *Journal* intends to occupy. The prefatory 'Editorial' announces that the *Journal* is open to a range of opinions and to a range of subjects having to do with Islam and Islamic civilisation, that it means to enable tolerance and understanding by offering a 'shared space' for academic inquiry and reflection, and it thanks the many academics 'of diverse backgrounds' who have supported the whole venture, whether as writers, consultants or academic referees. Any fair-minded person reading this Editorial is bound to suppose that the *Journal* will carry articles written by Muslims as well as by non-Muslims, that the assumptions and perspectives of the authors will be Islamic as well as non-Islamic. But the reality is quite otherwise. The reality is that the whole, i.e. the *overall*, character of the *Journal* is Western in its perspectives and its style: it makes no room whatever for articles or authors whose style or content of thought belongs within the Islamic tradition. On the contrary, all of those writers whose names suggest that they are Muslims, by submitting work to the *Journal* have submitted their being Muslim to the ethos of modern Western academic attitudes, which dominate the *Journal* absolutely. (It was explained earlier that that ethos is directly contradictory to, and incompatible with, the conditions and requirements of Muslim scholarship.) All Muslim work is under a number of constraints which make it conform to a non-Muslim ethos.

The first constraint is that no writer for this publication, not even a believing Muslim, may in any way signal his or her belief - therefore it is *forbidden* to begin any article with *bismi-llāh*. It is likewise *forbidden* to write, after mention of 'the Prophet, *'ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam'*. To admit these formulas would betray the first purpose of the *Journal*, which is to train Muslim authors to affect the distance and neutrality which Western academics, quite falsely, claim for themselves when writing about Islam. Implicit in this constraint is the acceptance that any work submitted by Muslim authors must fit in with Western academic manners and must not be presented by them as a part of their being Muslims. The unspoken assumption behind this apparently small matter of manners is that intellectual worth, quality and coherence of information or

argument, can only be found in disassociation from the manners proper to a Muslim writing as a Muslim. Any Muslim contributors to the *Journal* begin therefore in a position of inferiority. It also follows that, since all contributions are equal in being non-Muslim in their manners and purpose, the reader has no way of knowing whether the information and argument they convey are, from a Muslim viewpoint, reliable and trustworthy. The only way the reader has of knowing is either to guess from the scholar's name whether he or she intends to be read as a Muslim or to classify the subject of the article as strictly 'religious'. The Muslim reader is thus forced to read according to the rules of the Western-Christian separation of secular and religious. On these criteria, wholly unacceptable to a Muslim, the article in the first volume by Ja'afar Sheikh Idris on the subject of man as the vicegerent of God is strictly 'religious', and the article by John Wilkinson on Islamic water law is not. (In fact, when we look at the content of Idris' article we shall see that it is not at all 'religious', and certainly not Islamic.)

More seriously, this division in the kinds of subjects covered means that, since this *Journal* is a Western publication, it must, to secure credibility, give more space to what is not strictly 'religious'. In other words, the great majority of articles must be to do with subjects touching on Islamic civilisation in general rather than on what Muslims believe. Thus, the articles, like Idris's on man's vicegerency, have the appearance of being put in as sops to comfort Muslims with the feeling that there is something in the *Journal* that concerns them *as Muslims*. A non-Muslim Western reader is unlikely to take the least interest in how Muslims discuss among themselves the nature of man's role in the creation. The only way to interest a non-Muslim academic in this particular subject would be a *comparative* study of different religious accounts of the nature of man - in other words, to shape the presentation as a discussion within the discipline of Western comparative mythology, itself a sub-discipline of anthropology or linguistics. So powerful is the constraint under which any Muslim work is admitted into the *Journal* that even this piece by Idris - and it is no more than a sop to Muslim sentiments - ends up as an attack on two leaders

of the Islamic revival, Sayyid Qutb and al-Mawdūdī, saying that their discussion of the question of man's role in the creation is an irrelevance. After devoting some pages decrying their efforts to use the concept of *khalīfah* to counter the Western concept of man as an unrestrained agent with unconditioned authority in the world, Idris ends up asserting that it is not worthwhile pursuing their line of inquiry. Better for Muslims to stay with either a dictionary definition of the word, or the familiar, traditional extensions of that definition. This approach means that only an *academic* or *theoretical* discussion of the concept is worthwhile: it is not, according to Idris, worthwhile seeking to derive *present* ideas of political constitution or political purpose from it. (We do not need to spell out how well this conclusion fits with the general Western-Christian goal of treating the Qur'ān (i.e. the commands of Allah) as irrelevant for any *present* considerations of social-political order.)[8]

With a sop of this kind thrown in, the rest of the articles in the *Journal* can be devoted to presenting Islam in the language appropriate to the particular Western discipline it most concerns. Any Muslims writing on the larger issue of civilisation and history do so conscious that they must say the 'right' sort of things in the 'right' way. The third constraint, then, is that whatever Muslims submit to the *Journal* must measure up to Western academic expectations and must be judged by Western academic purposes and standards. The line taken in the Editorial is, therefore, the most dreadful deception. There is nothing even remotely justifying the impression deliberately given in the Editorial that the *Journal* institutes a tolerant, common space where, so to speak, well-meaning neighbours lean over their fences and address each other peaceably in their different idioms. Rather, there is but one idiom, and that idiom is Western through and through. The sources and resources to which writers make reference, whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, are Western, not Islamic. It follows that there can be no general ideas, no governing thesis, in any of the articles which is Muslim in

8 On this point, see the discussion below of Hans Küng, pp.43ff., and for Idris' attack on contemporary leaders of Islamic revival, pp.61ff.

orientation. Of course, it may reasonably be supposed, that Muslim scholars contributing to the *Journal* are aware of this situation. That is true, but they are evidently unable (or unwilling) to do anything about it.

Articles in the *Journal* by writers having Muslim-sounding names fall into two classes. Either they offer minor modifications to Western arguments which are generally accepted - examples in the first issue are Muḥsin Mahdi's comments on Western assessments of Muslim mediaeval philosophy, or Halt Inalçik's comments on Western accounts of the planning of Islamic cities. Or they abandon any pretence of an argument and simply collect and present information which is, as it were, background material for future work - examples in the first issue are the bulk of Ali A. Mazrui's account of the secularisation of Kiswahili, or Khaliq Nizami's account of the spread of the influence of Ibn Taymiyyah in the Indian sub-continent: both these articles are constructed in short sections with little overall argument. The first option may be described as accepting the prevailing Western definition of the battlefield and manner of engagement; the second as staying in the background, out of any battle, away from the firing line. In neither posture is there much dignity for Muslims or for Islam.

Is there then no room at all in the *Journal* for traditional Muslim scholarship? In fact, there is. It would be possible to include traditional scholarship under the rubric of a period style or even of a literary form (pious literature). Thus, given the *Journal*'s set-up, it should be possible to include, for example, a translation of al-Ghazālī's presentation of the duties of Muslim brotherhood or Muslim prayer, because such works, with their good Muslim manners of starting from the Qur'ān and *'Aḥādīth* and their avowed purpose of making their readers better people in the sight of Allah, are mediaeval period-pieces - the *Journal* can offer them as museum exhibits. Modern equivalents, that is, present day Muslim scholars urging fellow-Muslims to be brotherly or to pray properly, could not be admitted to the *Journal* except as a part of academic study of writing of this kind. They would be judged as having no worth in themselves since they do not sufficiently question the authorities on which they are based, namely the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The *Journal* adopts the conventional Western posture that 'pious exhortation' is one thing, 'academic inquiry' quite another; the only way for the two to come together is to have an 'academic inquiry' about 'pious exhortation'.

Thus, the *Journal* by and large acclaims and relays Western academic attitudes to Islam. Insofar as Muslims, particularly those abroad, are fooled by the presence of Muslim names in the list of consultant editors (or in the list of contributors) into thinking that the contents of the *Journal* are sound and reliable, the intention and achievements of the *Journal* are pernicious in the extreme. It does not, in any degree (as it promises to do) acclaim Muslim attitudes to Islam; nor does it relay what Muslims *as Muslims* think about Islam to Western scholars. In fact, it does what the academic journals of Oriental Institutes have been doing for so long, namely promote Western modes of thinking about Islam. The danger is that the collaborative look of the *Journal* and the fact that Muslim scholars lend their names to the venture, may deceive Muslims into believing that those Western modes of thinking are the only ones that deserve consideration.

Like other journals of the kind, the *Journal of Islamic Studies* has a substantial book review section which reviews some thirty or forty books. Publishers send their (often expensive) products free of charge to such journals because academic reviews are an essential part of the process of advertising books. It comes as no surprise that the books chosen for review in the *Journal* should promote ideas and works that reflect the perspectives and preferences of the Western academics, not Muslim perspectives and Muslim preferences. The Western perspective is thrust upon the reader not only by sheer, brute force of omission - Muslim publications are hardly represented at all, even those written in English - but also insidiously by giving room to non-Muslim, even anti-Muslim writers and their ideas.

For example, how many Muslim readers are likely to know that the Daniel Pipes whose work, the *Journal*, as a publication of the Oxford University Press and, therefore, is bound to advertise (vol.2, p.146), is the same Daniel Pipes who wrote an important document in which he summarised a research paper

presented by him to the Centre for Middle East Studies at Harvard University on 'Muslim fanatics and US policy'. In this paper, Pipes recommends to US and US-allied Arab governments:

1 that they not give any assistance to the 'fanatics' but, nevertheless, maintain contacts with them in order to understand how they think and to gauge their influence;
2 that they not allow them to participate in the government of their countries or to hold any other influential position [for example, as teachers in universities] which they might use against US interests;
3 that, in dealing jointly with the 'fanatics', the US should have only non-public contacts with 'friendly' Arab governments;
4 that the US should not allow the leaders of 'friendly' Arab governments to determine their relationship with the US; rather, the US alone should determine the terms of relationship.[9]

If we had the space to devote to it, many examples might be given from the review pages of the *Journal* to illustrate that it is working against the interests of Islam in general and of Muslim revival in particular. We would refer the reader to just two instances, deliberately selected as examples of the seemingly harmless, the merely 'academic'. (Both reviews are substantial, longer pieces, not minor 'notices'.)

One is the review of Richard Netton's *Allah Transcendent - Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* reviewed by Seyyid Hossein Nasr in volume 1 of the *Journal* (pp.150-3). The subject concerns the very substance of what Muslims believe about the nature of God; it is nothing peripheral. We should therefore be entitled to expect that a Muslim reviewer would be concerned to highlight the distortion that results from the Western preoccupation with Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, al-Fārabī, etc. Because Muslim philosophers of this line of thought were influenced by ancient Greek philosophers and therefore, in

[9] The research paper was translated into Arabic and published *in al-Mujtama'* (Kuwait), 26.11.1985. The summary given here is of pp.28-9 of this journal.

turn, their influence on the philosophy of mediaeval and Renaissance Europe was considerable, they receive enormous attention in the West. It is important that their non-centrality in Islamic civilisation is pointed out. The reviewer does not do so. While he finds fault with the book for linking Islamic philosophy (which, he asserts, is based upon belief in God) with techniques of reading derived from the so-called 'post-modern' French deconstructionist school, (and for accepting only some Muslim sufi writers as philosophers but not others), the most important central task of correcting the book's general perspective is not taken up. That means that the perspective is tacitly regarded as acceptable, even if the detail of claims within it could (in the reviewer's judgement) benefit from some common sense and wider learning.

In much the same way, the reviewer of Aziz al-Azmeh (ed.) *Islamic Law: Historical and Social Contexts*, in volume 2.1 of the *Journal* (*pp.*117-21), wholly accepts the perspective taken by the editor of these essays. That perspective insists that the Sharī'ah can only be properly studied within the relativity of its temporal context(s). This, of course, minimises the relevance of the Sharī'ah to present times and totally denies any Muslim claim to its Divine origin and its universality. The reader therefore comes across the extraordinary spectacle of a *non-Muslim* reviewer *defending* Muslims claiming allegiance to Islamic law. He defends against the charge that Muslim rulers merely pretended to respect the Sharī'ah and gave real importance to only non-Sharī'ah laws and regulations under the name of *qānūn*. The reviewer writes: 'It was often the case that *qānūn* paid lip service to Sharī'ah while in reality it legislated according to the dictates of the state. This is perfectly reasonable. In order to keep the peace, many societies have to harmonise their government directives with the given religion' (p.119). But from a Muslim viewpoint, this is not 'perfectly reasonable'. Aside from questioning the historical truth of what is here accepted as fact about the irrelevance of the Sharī'ah, a Muslim would want very seriously to question the commonplace view of Western jurisprudence, which sees the morality of laws as merely rational or utilitarian - that is, that a society's laws must reflect

the moral values of that society because (and only because) that is what supplies cohesiveness to that society. Indeed, there are a great many questions that a Muslim would want to put to this thesis, but this is not the place to go into them. What is relevant here is to grasp the potential evil that results, not from the malice of the individual reviewer, but from the functioning of an institution, namely the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, which is so arranged that a non-Muslim ends up in a posture appearing to defend a Muslim cause for the worst reasons.

The *'content'* of the Journal

It is, for obvious reasons, quite impractical to give detailed consideration to every article in the *Journal*. However, there is in the opening double-volume issue, one article that encapsulates perfectly the purpose of the *Journal* as an institution, how it sees and does its business. This article is 'Bustānī's *Encyclopaedia' by* Albert Hourani (vol.1, pp.111-20). There is no doubt that this well-known Orientalist could have contributed any number of pieces that Muslims would immediately find offensive. He deliberately chose a seemingly 'quiet', apparently wholly 'academic' little subject. It is meant to be inoffensive in subject and style.

A Muslim reader does not need to read particularly carefully, however, to realise that the article is far from inoffensive; indeed that it is a very well-calculated effort in a long and well-established Orientalist programme.

In this piece, what Hourani is doing is to glorify al-Bustānī and his missionary and Westernising activities among the Arabs/Muslims in Lebanon; especially in the fields of culture, education and publishing. It is well-known that Butrus al-Bustānī, having converted to Protestantism, worked with the American Protestant mission in Beirut as a teacher and translator of their pamphlets and books around the end of the nineteenth century. He also worked for several years helping the mission to translate the Bible into Arabic. He greatly encouraged Christian education in Lebanon and established a school for that purpose which was called, however, a 'National' school. ʾIsmāʿīl, the Khedive of Egypt at the time, gave al-Bustānī financial and moral support for the *Encyclopaedia*. The programme of the *Encyclopaedia* fitted in very well with the Khedive's own feverish efforts to subject Egypt culturally to the West: he is notorious for claiming that 'Egypt is a part of Europe', meaning that it is not a part of the Islamic world. This is the very same line followed by Taha Hussein in his *Mustaqbal ath-Thaqā-fah fī Miṣr* (The future of culture in Egypt). And this line, glorifying Western culture and claiming Egypt as a part of it, is what Hourani stresses in his chapter on Taha Hussein in *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*.[10] al-Bustānī makes it clear in the introduction of his *Encyclopaedia* that he is presenting what the Arabs/Muslims *need*: in particular, the history and civilisation of Europe and, even more significantly, the general literature and history of the Arabs *as seen from the European point of view*. He therefore concentrates in the *Encyclopaedia* on the origins of Western culture and civilisation, and devotes many articles to Greek history, mythology, literature and philosophy. He also emphasises in his articles on Europe that European civilisation is the most important in human history, and that the main aim of his *Encyclopaedia* is to bring that civilisation to the Arabic language and people, or rather to bring Arabs/Muslims to the 'new world' created by European civilisation. And he deals with the history of Arabs and of Islam not as a unique series of phenomena having their own proper dynamic, vocabulary and framework, but as a history that should be studied by the criteria and in the light of the civilisation of Europe.

We would argue that the large goal of al-Bustānī's *Encyclopaedia*, a Christian missionary and Westerniser among the Arabs/Muslims, is also the large goal of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* as a whole and as an institution. That the non-Muslim People of the Book, having the power to do so, should set up such an institution with their own resources and for their own purposes is only to be expected. But, in the name of Allah, what business have Muslim scholars in raising funds for such a project and contributing to it? How can that possibly be justified?

[10] Oxford University Press, 1962; repr. Cambridge University Press, 1983, 1987, ch.12, pp.324-40.

From the examples given above, and the discussion of them, it clearly emerges that:

1 all the issues which we have referred to have to do with the essentials of Islam (*'Uṣūl*): *'Aqīdah (creed), 'Ibādah (worship), Ḥaḍārah (civilisation)*; not minor or peripheral matters. Even minor matters, however, as we noted earlier, are subject to the *ijtihād* of only a qualified Muslim.
2 the Centre does not distinguish, nor makes any effort to distinguish, between calling the People of the Book to Islam and calling on them to write about or teach Islam.

We must then ask:

1 Is it permissible in Islam for any Muslim, using the resources of Muslims, to publish articles of this kind on these subjects? Is it permissible for Muslims to fund the publication of writings which present Islam through the perspective of secularists and missionaries?
2 If it is not permitted, and it is not, how do those Muslims who are doing this justify it?
3 How did the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān*, who cannot claim ignorance of what Islam enjoins and what it forbids, allow such materials to be published? Did they know or did they not know what these publications contain and what they intend? Whether they knew or whether they didn't, they are responsible for what is published under their authority - for, it is certainly their names which appear on the list of Consultant Editors and/or on the Board of Trustees.

The fact is that real authority in the Centre lies in the hands of the non-Muslims, and not the Muslims. The non-Muslims hold very high positions in the University. Among them are Principals, Deans, Heads of Departments, senior Professors - and these are continually available to be 'consulted'. The decisive influence is necessarily, as it was always intended that it should be, with them; not with the Muslims who are mostly abroad and who, when (very rarely) present at meetings, have little to contribute except a facade of legitimacy. That is a policy in contradiction to the Qur'ān:... *Allah will not give the unbelievers any [right of] way over the believers* (*an-Nisā'*, 4.141). (The same situation of non-Muslim control of Muslim affairs recurred during the Gulf crisis and the war that followed - and the same Muslim scholars were involved in seeking, falsely, to legitimise it. See below, pp.51ff.)

Finally, the claim of high academic standards at Oxford does not apply at all in the case of study of Islam. The University's long-established Oriental Institute has a long history of prejudice against, and distortion of, Islam. As for the Director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, he can scarcely be regarded as qualified to administer and supervise the study of Islam: he does not even know Arabic.

CHAPTER 3

SAUDI LOYALTY TO THE *KUFFĀR*

1 SAUDI ASSISTANCE TO THE ORIENTALISTS

It is very important that readers should understand *how* Saudi collaboration with the Orientalists and missionaries operates, *how* the Saudis give the assistance that they give. Sometimes the relationship is deliberately open, the well-publicised case of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' being an obvious example. However, the relationship is not, and could not, be a matter of continuously open public policy. It is established slowly, quietly, under-handedly. The direction of these links is nonetheless clear. So too is the danger they pose to the well-being and security of the *umma*.

The best way to spell out for the reader what is happening is to relate a number of incidents, the truth of which I can attest both as observer and direct participant. These incidents disclose the interweaving connections between, on the one hand, senior government officials on the Saudi side and Muslim scholars sponsored by the Saudis and, on the other hand, those Orientalists (academic or missionary) and other Western agents who have a long-term interest in 'developing' Muslims and Islam. The general purpose of these connections, (never directly stated) is:

1 to introduce the Western-Christian perspective into Muslim minds at source; that is, to make future and present teachers of Islam see and think their religion and way of life in that perspective;
2 to make the hearing of, and dealing with, that non-Islamic (in fact, anti-Islamic) perspective seem as normal and proper as the hearing of, and dealing with, differences between Muslims themselves;
3 to achieve certain specific changes in the religion and way of life of Islam. These specific objectives are:
   i to have Muslims treat and discuss the Qur'ān according to the principles and manners in which the scripture of the Jews and Christians is discussed;
   ii to separate the belief in and worship of Allah from the practice of Islam as a social-political order under Sharī'ah;
   iii to alter radically the relationship between the Sharī'ah as a body of principles of law and the implementation of those principles in positive laws: it is intended that Muslims should regard certain Sharī'ah provisions as 'true' but no longer relevant. For example, the proportions of inheritance for males and females or the prohibition against non-Muslims inheriting from Muslims and vice versa.

It *is* difficult, at first, to see how so large and dangerous a programme should be embedded in activities so seemingly innocuous as people of different cultural backgrounds sitting around the same public platform, working in the same library, writing in the same journal. Because what one sees on any single occasion is only particular individuals trying to get along with each other, listening to, or reading each other's views. But in actual reality, this inviting of different individuals to give an address from the same public platform, this sitting them in the same academic space, this providing them with funds to run journals and institutes together, is systematically creating an ethos where one party dominates and controls the agenda for thought and discussion, where one party defines and controls the intellectual space. That party with the upper hand in the affair is not the party of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Incident 1

In 1983, John Esposito, working at Holy Cross College, a missionary-academic establishment in New York, was invited to King Abdulaziz University in Jiddah to give a lecture entitled 'Islamic Studies in America'. The reader should know that academic visits of this kind do not happen in Saudi Arabia without explicit permission of the university and government authorities at the highest level. Did those authorities think that they were inviting a speaker who was interested in the

spreading of Islam in America or even the understanding of Islam? It is unlikely. At any rate, John Esposito spoke towards the end of his lecture of a project he had in mind for the USA. This project was *the establishment of an institute for the study of Islam in which both Orientalists and Muslim scholars would collaborate.*

That, to the best of my knowledge, is the first public statement of a policy to get Muslims to cooperate with non-Muslims in teaching (or in preparing people to teach) Islam. When a Christian missionary makes such an offer, what should a Muslim think? As I gradually came to the realisation that Esposito's project was to be set up not only in the USA but also in Europe and perhaps even in Saudi Arabia (about which more later), I felt that the senior *'Ulamā'* in the country should be alerted to do something about it. I therefore wrote an open letter on the subject to Shaikh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Bāz. Sadly, the most senior *'Ālim* in Saudi Arabia did nothing.

Esposito's project was realised not only in the USA but also in the UK, at Oxford. The Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' was initiated in 1985 with the help of the Saudis. At Oxford itself the 'idea' for such a centre was not the dream of a Muslim, (though a young Muslim, Dr Farhan Nizami, was appointed its Director), but of his very much older colleague at St Cross College, Oxford, Dr David Browning. Dr Browning is not a Muslim, not a Christian missionary, not an Orientalist. He is a geographer whose field of speciality is - not the Middle East - Latin America. He has retired from his academic commitment to geography and now devotes himself exclusively (and very strenuously) to the cause of promoting the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies'. How Dr Browning fits into the picture is obscure unless one knows that, through his work abroad as independent 'foreign observer' of national elections, he has very strong connections with the British Foreign Office. That ministry is sometimes incorrectly described as 'pro-Arab'. It is not in the least pro-Arab; it is pro-Arab oil. Its anti-Islamic postures and policies are doubtless an integral part of the West's strategic interest in suppressing the Islamic movements and controlling the oil resources of the region.

Incident 2

Between 18th and 25th October, 1986, a conference was held at University College, Oxford, entitled 'How to deal with Muslims in the Middle East'. The conference, organised by Bishop Dr Kenneth Cragg, was held in association with the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies', its Director being personally present there, as well as Dr 'Ali al-Ghāmidī, the Saudi Director of the Islamic Cultural Centre, attached to the Regents Park mosque in London. As I happened to be in Oxford at the time, a Muslim who knew me suggested that I should attend and, if allowed to do so, try to answer Dr Cragg.

It is certain that someone should respond to Cragg's very long and subversive campaign against Islam. He has openly stated his aim as not trying to convert Muslims (which he dismisses as the 'numbers game') but as getting them to experience Christianity's Christ. To this purpose Cragg has, over almost three decades, dedicated a number of books, including studies of the Qur'ān and *Sīrah,* and also picked out for public exposure Muslim writings that support his programme. An example is his translation of Muḥammad Kāmil Husayn's *Qaryah Ẓālimah* as *City of Wrong,* in which a Muslim 'imagines' his way into the Christian experience. Readers should not be misled into thinking that a merely hypothetical or literary 'experiencing' of Christianity is offered. On the contrary, the aim is, after such 'experiencing', for Muslims to mend their ways. Cragg would like, for instance, Muslims to end the legal prohibition on Muslim women marrying Christians. He also supports the surreptitious presentation of Christian 'witness' to Muslims in the Arab world: committed Christians are to accept work in their professional fields in, say, Saudi Arabia, and through the contacts they make as doctors (especially women doctors who can gain admission to the heart of the family), pharmacists, engineers, teachers, etc., to run private gatherings through which the Muslims can discreetly be offered Christianity.

For non-Muslims to hold such a conference is their right; for Muslims to attend in order to defend an Islamic view of the religion and history of Muslims is also, unquestionably, proper.

But why should Muslims assist in the setting up of such a conference? That is *not* proper. Still worse is it to deny Muslims the right to defend their religion and history, to restrict their freedom to do so, and to take punitive action against them if they do.

I was at that time teaching in the Department of Islamic Studies at King Saud University (KSU) in Riyad. When I returned, I was summoned for disciplinary investigation by Dr Muṣṭafā al-'A'ẓamī, then the Head of Department. Now, it seems to me, that what I had said at the conference in Oxford could in principle be questioned by any concerned Muslim - for its content or its manner. I had not imagined that the right (actually the duty) to speak on matters of deep concern to Islam and to Muslims could also be questioned. But that is precisely the line that Dr al-'A'ẓamī took. He did not question what I had said; he questioned *that* I had said it. The complaint was presented as a procedural one: it is not permitted, I was told, for any faculty member of a Saudi institution to speak at any conference or other public occasion without express permission to do so. What this means, in practice, is that whenever (and wherever) such collaborative conferences are held, only those Muslims will be allowed to speak up who, broadly speaking, agree with Muslim-non-Muslim collaborative ventures in this field.

Incident 3

In January 1986, the Faculty of Arts of KSU, began issuing a journal entitled *al-'Uṣūr* (Eras) whose editorial board is made up of Muslims and non-Muslims. Among the Orientalists on that board of consultants is Rev Dr Montgomery Watt who, as well as being the author of several mischievous and misguiding works in the field of *Sīrah*,[11] is one of the editors of *The Muslim World*, published by the missionary centre in Selly Oak, Birmingham. This journal was established in 1911 by the notorious Samuel Zwemer and is published jointly with the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, USA. Among other

[11] See above, pp.22 ff. and the accompanying footnote 7.

Orientalist names on the editorial board of *al-'Uṣūr* are: Rex Smith (University of Durham) and Richard Chambers (University of Chicago).

Now, it has been claimed that a Western university would not permit the setting up of an academic centre for the study of Islam unless that centre had a management in which Western (non-Muslim) academics were sufficiently represented - in other words, that the price of the prestige of a place like Oxford is the acceptance that non-Muslim have a say in how Islam is to be studied and taught. As we have seen, that is a price Muslims should never willingly pay, unless they mean to weaken and betray their religion. But supposing all that is true of a Western university, how can it possibly be true of a Muslim university in a Muslim capital built on Muslim land with exclusively Muslim resources? What necessity can explain the Saudi authorities following the same pattern of collaboration with non-Muslims as is followed by, for example, the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies'? The answer, alas, is that it is so not by necessity but by volition, by policy, chosen and implemented.

Incident 4

On 12th August, 1989, I was invited to speak by the student members of the Oxford Islamic Society on 'An Islamic perspective on Orientalism'. In this address, I criticised Orientalists and the role of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' in furthering their programme. To address a small undergraduate society, even in Oxford, is no major event. Hardly worth anyone's notice. There are many small societies in the University; many speakers; many addresses. I was surprised, therefore, that a report on the occasion should have been written, let alone that it should then be sent all the way to Riyad, to Dr al-'A'ẓamī, my Head of Department at KSU.

Incident 5

On 26 Safar 1410 (1990), at a meeting of the Department of Islamic Studies of KSU, I talked about the responsibility of the *'Ulamā'*, especially of those with influence in Saudi Arabia, to at least impede, if they could not stop, the infiltration of Orientalists into the field of Islamic studies - something surely possible where universities were under direct Muslim administration and within the jurisdiction of Muslim governments. I mentioned by name 'Abdullāh Naseef and 'Abdullāh al-Turkī who are certainly influential in Saudi Arabia. They are also trustees of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies'. I advised them to fear Allah for giving, in their position, encouragement and support to the Orientalists.

Incident 6

On 20 Rajab 1410 (1990), after praying *ṣalāt al-'Ishā'* in the Riyad mosque used by university staff members, I stood up before the congregation and criticised two Saudi policies: a) their encouraging Orientalist studies of Islam; and b) their tribalist policy of preferring a Saudi to a non-Saudi for university entrance to post-graduate courses (a policy widely known about and frequently criticised in the non-Saudi Arabic press). I quoted in this talk, the verse from *al-'An'ām* revealed on the occasion when the Quraysh asked the Prophet, *ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam,* to dismiss from his circle the non-Arabs and the poor (i.e. the socially weak) among the Muslims, men like Bilāl, Salmān al-Fārisī, Suhayb ar-Rūmī, Khabbāb, 'Ammār, and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd. The Quraysh asked that these 'riff-raff' (*'Arādhil*) be removed from his presence and then they would join his circle and hear his preaching. Allah then revealed in His Book:

> *Do not dismiss [from your circle] those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, seeking His countenance. You are not accountable for them in anything, nor are they accountable for you in anything; if you should dismiss them you would be a wrongdoer* (*al-'An'ām*, 6.52)

I quoted also the *ḥadīth* recorded in all *ṣaḥīḥ* collections that

the search for knowledge is *Farīḍah*, an obligation. I concluded with the appeal: 'Fear Allah, o Manṣūr al-Turkī! Fear Allah! Fear Allah!' (Manṣūr al-Turkī was the Vice-Chancellor of KSU.)

Many people in the congregation approved and applauded and indeed rejoiced because this matter had at last been aired in public, and in a mosque.

About an hour later, after I had returned home, two men called at my flat. One of them is the brother of Ḥasan ibn Sa'īd who is a member of the Saudi intelligence service in the Ministry of the Interior. This man threatened that my contract would be terminated if I did not go and apologise to Manṣūr al-Turkī. I refused. Two months later, the threat was carried out.

Another consequence of my speaking in the mosque was the dismissal of Manṣūr al-Turkī from his post. The dismissal was of course called a resignation. The reason he was dismissed was not the policy he pursued but the fact that he had allowed that policy to be criticised in public by a member of his university.

Incident 7

During Sha'bān 1410 (1990) a large seminar was held in the Intercontinental Hotel in Riyad on the subject of *Da'wah* (the dissemination of Islam) in the world. The chairman was 'Abdullāh al-Turkī. Among participants were: Muhammad Qutb, Rāshid al-Ghannoushi, Ḥassān Ḥaṭhūt. I asked to make a comment and, in my short comment, I referred to the danger to Islamic *Da'wah* in Europe of allowing non-Muslims to collaborate in the presentation of Islam in the West, since, inevitably, that presentation was a mis-presentation, a distortion. I pointed out that, for that mis-presentation and distortion of Islam those Muslims who are collaborating with it are responsible. I gave the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies' as an example. Many students were there and approved openly and rejoiced. Not so 'Abdullāh al-Turkī - understandably, as my comment certainly included his contribution to the activities of the Orientalists, as a trustee of Oxford Centre.

Incident 8

Hans Küng, the dissident Catholic theologian, quite well-known in Saudi Arabia, was invited to give a talk entitled: ('Original Christianity: between the Gospels and the Qur'ān') on the evening of Monday, 14th May 1990, in Riyad. In the morning of that day, he came, accompanied by Dr Ja'afar Sheikh Idris and other figures from Imam University, to the Department of Islamic Studies where I was still working. I attended the informal meeting that followed. In explanation of why Hans Küng was invited, it was emphasised that he was an Orientalist *sympathetic* to Islam and *sympathetic* to the Arab-Palestinian cause. The meeting was chaired by a professor of physics, also an Islamic scholar, Dr Muhammad al-Mas'arī, who encouraged me to speak up and answer Küng.[12] Some students from KSU also attended this informal, get-to-know-the-speaker meeting.

During this meeting, I asked Hans Küng the following questions:

1 From where did he derive his knowledge about Islam? The answer: from various Orientalists, especially Paret, Küng's teacher in Tübingen University. Evidently, Küng was not qualified in Arabic or Islamic studies.
2 He is famous for denying the infallibility of the Pope; did Küng also deny the infallibility of the Prophets, *'alaihim as-salam?* The answer: he did deny it, and certainly therefore, he denied the infallibility of the Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam.*
3 How did he view the position and role of the Americans on the Palestinian question? The answer: he felt the Americans' attitude was favourable to the Palestinians.

[12] In the summer of 1993, Dr Muhammad al-Mas'arī was dismissed from his post in King Saud University and subsequently jailed and tortured for being the spokesman of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights. ('Legitimate rights' means those rights granted to human beings by Allah as established in the Sharī'ah.) In April 1994, Dr. al-Mas'arī escaped from Saudi Arabia and arrived in London. He is now seeking political asylum in Britain.

Not surprisingly, after this discussion, some students got in touch with the organising authorities and asked them to cancel Küng's lecture. Fearing a public disturbance, the authorities consulted the Ministry of the Interior. I turned up at the time and place appointed for Küng's lecture; so did many others: we found that it had been cancelled.

Hans Küng on Islam

On that occasion, by the mercy of Allah, *subḥānahu wa ta'ālā,* the truth about Hans Küng's attitudes and purpose with regard to Islam and the Muslims were exposed by his own words uttered, just as they are exposed in his published words for those who will take the trouble to read them before, in neglect of their responsibilities to their religion and way of life, they invite him to address Muslims.

Küng's views on Islam are very explicitly presented in his book *Christianity and the World Religions.*[13] In the part of the book dealing with 'Islam and Christianity' (pp.3-135), Küng advocates for Muslims what he calls 'critical method' in reading their Scripture. This is the procedure applied, from the early nineteenth century, to Christian study of the Bible. Küng refers to various Orientalists whose works have followed this approach. Among them are:

1 (p.33) John Wansborough's *Qur'ānic Studies* (1977), in which the author claims that the Qur'ān was shaped over a period of two centuries by the Muslim community interpreting what were taken to be Prophetic sayings.
2 (p.34) John Burton's *The Collection of the Qur'ān* (1977) which follows a similar approach but confines the period of 'collection' to the Prophet's lifetime.
3 (p.34) Günter Lüling's *The Rediscovery of the Prophet Muhammad* (1981) based on *On the Primitive Version of the Qur'ān* (1974) which claims to distinguish in the Qur'ānic text a primitive Christian-Arabian Qur'ān attributed to the Prophet and the rest attributed to a much later period.
4 (p.34) Angelika Neuwirth's *Studies on the Composition of*

[13] 1986; Collins, London, 1987. Page references in the discussion immediately following in this section refer to this edition of Küng's book.

the Meccan Suras (1981) with which Küng appears to be particularly pleased: 'With her training in the formal-critical approach to the Old Testament, Neuwirth can prove that, whatever the case with the rest of the Qur'ān, the Meccan suras were put together by the Prophet himself for liturgical recitation...'

What business can intelligent Muslims who care about and for their religion have with 'curiosity' of this kind? It is a curiosity about Islam whose techniques are directly copied from Western models, regardless of whether the techniques are appropriate, and whose aim is a determination to reproduce among Muslims the same reservations about the Qur'ān, as Jews and Christians are bound to have about the Bible. To add insult to injury, Küng offers this line of scholarship as the road to peace and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians - what he means is that Muslims will believe and think as modern Christians do.

Küng maintains that the oral influence of Judaic and Christian traditions on the composition of the Qur'ān cannot (and should not) be denied by Muslims. There were contacts between Muslims and the People of the Book during the Prophet's lifetime, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam;* and many of the Biblical prophets are mentioned by name in the Qur'ān, as well as Mary, the mother of Jesus, *'alaihi s-salam.* Küng infers that all these prophets were known to the Prophet Muhammad, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam,* before revelation came to him.

Sometimes a wilful blindness accompanies arrogance: how can any scholar who, presumably, has at least read the Qur'ān in translation, have missed the fact that this particular line of argument is anticipated and answered by the Qur'ān itself? It is the very argument put forward by the arrogant polytheists and Jews during the period of the Revelation which answered them: *This is [some part] of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you. You yourself did not know it, nor did your people, before this [revelation]* (*Hūd*, 11.41). The Prophet, *ṣalla-llahu 'alaihi wa sallam,* is altogether innocent, by the testimony of the Qur'ān, of what the Orientalists (like the unbelievers before them) mischievously allege. Their aim is to enlist the support of Muslims themselves in making these

allegations. They begin by saying that the Qur'ān is, like their own discredited scriptures, only partly true. Küng himself states (p.34) that he believes the Qur'ān to be both revealed *and* the work of the Prophet. He then goes on to offer this position to 'educated modern' Muslims as a way for them to apply to their Scripture the kind of critique that was applied to the Christians' scriptures. Küng's point, evidently, is to imply that any Muslim who takes the whole Qur'ān to be *verbatim* the word of Allah - which has always been an axiom of Muslim belief - is neither educated nor modern. He writes with the conviction that Western culture has triumphed and it is up to the Muslims to adapt (i.e. submit) to it: and his, the Christian scholar's task is to make that submission easier, and to look among Muslim scholars for individuals who have been willing to submit and can therefore be applauded for their 'constructive' approach. Here, in a nutshell, is the whole ambition of the collaboration which is offered to Muslims and in which, alas, so many nominal Muslims are willing to participate:

> Christians and Muslims today need to continue their conversation about this difficult but fundamental point of how to understand revelation... Everyone knows that in various Islamic countries right now there are powerful movements for Islamic renewal at work... Perhaps over the long haul, in a more self-conscious Islamic world that is trying in so many ways to catch up with Western science and culture, historicocritical study of the holy book will eventually be allowed to become a reality. (p.35)

It is only natural for the enemies of Islamic renewal to wish to divert its energies into directions which harmonise with cultural and religious preferences which have nothing to do with Islam. For Muslims to collaborate in any such programme is to capitulate. But it is to Allah that Muslims - no matter what their circumstances - are required to surrender, not to the enemies of their religion. The tragedy is that people like Küng are able to find accomplices not only among officials of Muslim governments but also among Muslims whose scholarship should have guarded them against any such betrayal of the *dīn*.

How will the Qur'ān be esteemed if the collaborators have their way? How else but as Küng wishes - *relatively, intermittently, adaptably*. In his own words (p.36; the italics are Küng's):

> understanding the Qur'ān as a *living message*, continually heard anew... as the great *prophetic* testimony to the one and only mighty and merciful God... A consistent testimony that may and should be handed down in a variable form, always freshly adapted to the time, place, and individuals in question, so as to provide an unambiguous, constructive solution for the present-day conflicts with science and history, as well as the modern ethos and sense of law. That would be a historicocritical approach...

But it is Jews and Christians who adapt their scriptures to their own transient needs and purposes, who fit their religion to the prevailing 'ethos'. Whereas the distinction of the Muslims has always been, by the mercy of Allah, to have a Scripture perfectly preserved, to whose commands they adapt themselves and so make the Qur'ān the 'prevailing ethos'. It is indeed difficult to believe that there could exist scholars who, while calling themselves Muslims, are nonetheless willing to go along with the 'adaptive' approach commended by modern Christians and Jews. The intense pressure for this approach since the early eighties, the denigration of all other Muslims as 'fanatics' and 'fundamentalists', is evidence that the People of the Book (having failed in their attempts at conversion, especially in the face of the renewal of Islam, resort to subversion), invite Muslims to a '*living message*', when what they really mean (and want) to do is to stifle and kill that message.

When, later in his study of Islam, Küng deals with the question of the Sharī'ah, he follows the same procedure and reaches the same conclusion. Muslims are invited to learn the familiar Christian distinction between law (which, in the Christian perspective, must become legal*ism*) and faith; to learn to see the Qur'ān as a source-book for ethics and not, as those who first heard it and then gave their lives in the effort to establish it, as the source for laws as well as values. Again,

without much irony, he is able to suggest that Muslims have had little choice in the matter in recent centuries and certainly none now: the 'fundamentalist' programme for the re-introduction of Islamic law (the *ḥadd* punishments for example, particularly for apostasy and adultery, and the prohibition of *ribā* (interest) are doomed to fail, Küng thinks, because Westernisation is too well-entrenched). He seems to believe that wherever education (he means secularisation) lifts the Muslims out of their 'mediaeval' cast of mind, they are certain to seek the flexibilities of a modern Christian attitude to sacred law. And, once again, Küng is able to enlist the views of 'modernist' or 'reformist' Muslim scholars ('Efforts at an intra-Islamic critique of the Law', pp.66-9) and quotes extensively, and with particular relish, from Fazlur-Rahman.

It soon becomes clear what the contents of the reforms desirable for Muslims in the modern age are. First of all, Muslim must grasp the central (Christian) point that 'the *shari'a exists for the sake of man*, and not man for the sake of the *shari'a*. Man is therefore the measure of the law' (p.65; Küng's italics). Having grasped that, Muslims will be able to get rid of 'the scandalous shortcomings of Islamic law' - Küng especially wants 'dissent' (he means blasphemy) and the charging of interest to be made acceptable, and he wants all the *ḥadd* penalties to be abolished. He praises the Mu'tazila as being nearer to the truth because they believed the Qur'ān to be 'created' and 'therefore modifiable' - he fails to point out that the Mu'tazila scholars (however large a place is given to them by Western Orientalists) had rather less influence on Muslim thought in general than those Christians had on Christian thought in general, who urged the Church to allow polygamy. It comes as no surprise that Küng is 'against' polygamy - it does not fit the modern ethos. He calls for Muslims to join the women's liberation movement (p.84), to eliminate the differences between male and female rights of inheritance, and to make legal testimony equivalent for both sexes - all such laws were all very well in the seventh century, he feels, but not in the twentieth!

That must suffice as an illustration of Küng's *sympathetic* attitude to Islam. We turn now to his sympathy for the

Palestinians' cause against the Zionists. His attitudes on this question are explicit in his book *Judaism: The Religious Situation of Our Time*.[14] We need to note that this book, dedicated 'For my Jewish friends throughout the world', was most warmly welcomed by Jews - as an example, see the review in the London *Times* ('A Catholic on the Jews', 26 March, 1993) by Rabbi Dr Albert H. Friedlander. Küng devotes several paragraphs in his preface to reassuring the reader that he enjoys close and friendly relations with Israel, with its institutions, with its religious and political leaders inside and outside the country. He records his lecture visits to the Van Leer Institute in Tel Aviv and the University of Haifa, his association with the Swiss-Jewish society, and 'numerous conversations and meetings' with the Israeli Foreign Office and other representatives of official Israeli politics. Küng does not mention any meeting, association or conversation with any Palestinians either inside or outside the country for which, being secure in his own homeland, he expresses such interest and concern.

Küng's basic political understanding is that the Jews believe themselves, exclusively, to be God's chosen people, and on the basis of belonging to a race, have a *right* to the promised land, that is, Palestine. Küng is quite unembarrassed by this endorsement of divine favouritism. He is also quite unembarrassed - despite his own passionate argument in favour of a historicocritical reading of all sacred scriptures (the Qur'ān included) - by the reduction of the Old Testament to a legal deed of title to a piece of land. The inhumanity of forcible eviction of that land's native population - despite their centuries-long tolerance of the Jews already living there (in contrast to Christian practice in that same holy land) and which broke down only when the Zionist programme became too blatant to be ignored - is accepted by Küng as an *inconvenience*. Lest the reader should think I am mis-presenting (or exaggerating) Küng's position, I here quote his own words (pp.45-6):

> for Judaism, which preserved its primal bond with the land of Israel (Hebrew *Eretz Israel*), even in the time of the 'dispersion' (Greek *Diaspora*), the relation to this particular land, the 'promised land', is quite essential... Whether or not it is convenient for others, Yahweh's chosen people and the promised land now belong together.

Küng shows no awareness that accepting the *belonging together of Jews and Israel* is also, necessarily, an acceptance of the dispossession of the land's original inhabitants in favour of European colonists, of the *forcing apart of Palestinians and Palestine*. By what stretch of imagination can this non-awareness (or denial) of the Palestinians' rights be described as 'sympathetic'?

Küng's position is not, in fact, based upon a genuinely sympathetic assessment of the needs or rights of the Palestinians. On the contrary, it is based upon a typically European-Christian cynicism about the realities of power. That cynicism derives, in turn, from the Christian attitude to legality as an *alternative* domain to the domain of rightness, and practical morality as an *alternative* to ideal spirituality. Islamic civilisation has always refused this division, although, unfortunately (for mankind in general, as well as for Muslims), there are some eminent Muslims who are willing to play the game of power, just as Christians and Jews do, for its own sake, divorced from any commitment to the life of submission and devotion to the will of Allah: indeed, they achieve eminence precisely by accepting that game of power and its rules. When they do so, they are hailed as moderates, men of vision, progressive, open-minded, tolerant, and so on: and, the faithful, they, alas, are reviled as fanatics and regressives. In short, we should not be surprised by the cynicism within Küng's projected 'compromise', nor should we be surprised that the main elements of that compromise are attributed to one of the West's favourite Muslims, the former President of Egypt, Anwar al-Sadat.

Küng tells us that Jews, Christians and Muslims 'are bound together by the major characteristics which they have in

[14] SCM Press Ltd London, 1992; trans. John Bowden from *Die Religöse Situation der Zeit: Das Judentum*, R. Piper GmbH & Co, KG, Munich, 1991. Page references in the discussion immediately following refer to the translation.

common'. These are: Semitic origin, belief in the same One God of Abraham, their tribal ancestor, belief in prophetic proclamation and revelation laid down once for all in scripture and which remains normative; the basic ethos of a fundamental humanity founded in God's will, and the ten commandments, etc. (pp.17-18). He advocates peace on the basis of a recognition of these common characteristics, and commends (somewhat vaguely) the idea of one nation, one religion, one prayer. He advocates the expression of this ancient community in a literal coming together to pray: Jews and Christians already have shared texts; it should not be too difficult to find texts (and avoid rubrics) which would enable Muslims to join in and address the same words to God in the same place on the same occasion (p.580).

It all seems very charming and positive until the full implications (for legal and political justice, for what is morally and spiritually right in the situation) become clear. How are Jews, Christians, Muslims to proceed with this charming idea *in practice?* Küng tells us:

'Perhaps the suggestion of a Muslim can help us here - that of Anwar al-Sadat, to whom Israel owes peace with Egypt' (p.578). Sadat's suggestion, also based on emphasising common origins and sharing worship and places of worship, was to build a new place of worship dedicated by the adherents of all three religions and to build it near St Catherine's monastery in Sinai. Küng goes yet further. What need is there of building a new place? A perfect site already exists (pp.579-80): the Dome of the Rock. The mosque could also serve as synagogue and church.

The implications are rather stark. The Muslims do not need to recover Jerusalem: they can have it by making a formal present of it to the Jews and Christians.

We hardly need offer a comment on this suggestion - even if it were not cynically motivated, it would be unacceptable. We do need, however, to remind ourselves of the Qur'ānic position on the 'community' between Muslims and the People of the Book: the Qur'ān does invite the People of the Book to consider themselves one nation with the Muslims, going back to the Prophet 'Ibrāhīm, *'alaihi s-salam,* and to do so on the basis

that he was neither Jew nor Christian, but *Muslim:*

Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright Muslim (ḥanīfan musliman) and he was not of the idolaters." (*'Āla-'Imrān*, 3.67)

2 SAUDI POLITICAL AND MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH THE KUFFĀR

I

The political and military association between the Saudi authorities and the *kuffār* is not, in fact, so much a relationship of collaboration as of subjection. The Saudi authorities subject the lands, seas, and all the resources which they should administer for the benefit of all Muslims, to Western, specifically American, political interests in the region. That has been the case (though not so widely known as now) since the founding of the kingdom under British imperial 'protection'. It has come to be widely accepted since the Gulf crisis of 1990. At the 'invitation' of the Gulf Arab rulers, notably the Saudis, the military forces of the *kuffār* occupied the Arabian Peninsula in order to prosecute their war against Iraq; thereafter, having destroyed that country's civil as well as military structures, they continue to have a very large and powerful military presence in the Gulf countries. This is done with much less publicity than during the Gulf war but with not much effort at concealment. The policy of non-concealment also has its purposes apart from its effect of proving the Gulf regimes helpless, it makes them vulnerable to the discontent of their own people which in turn makes them more dependent upon the Western presence. The situation is not very different from the protection rackets run by the mafia: the Gulf Arab regimes are required, in exchange for 'protection', to spend huge sums of money on the purchase of arms and other equipments (which, if the Arabs could use them effectively would not be sold to them) and other back-up services, which returns the petrodollars to the West and keeps

the Western military industry well-enough supplied with funds to go on producing new kinds and grades of weapons which their victims cannot match. It is a vicious circle in every sense.

The ambition to dominate the Arabian Peninsula is not a new one. The goal has its roots in the missionary activities which were initiated in the Gulf towards the end of the nineteenth century. Samuel Zwemer, the American Christian who established the first mission in the area as long ago as 1889, founded many schools and churches in the coastal townships. Zwemer is explicit in his understanding of the situation at that time.[15] The Christian missionaries are to consider themselves as the allies of the Jews in their hopes and plans for the creation of a Jewish homeland in the region. Zwemer justifies this on the grounds that the region had 'belonged' to Christ: before Islam came to dominate, there had been Christian communities in the Peninsula (in Najrān) and, similarly, Jewish communities (in Yathrib (Madīnah), Khaybar, etc.). Western powers had the right, in his view, to bring the region 'back' to its former religious affiliations.

An American Orientalist, John Kelly, who served as adviser to the President of the United Arab Emirates, advocates the re-occupation of the Gulf area by Western powers to reverse or replace the withdrawal of the British Empire east of Suez.[16] The primary motivation may be to control the oil reserves of the region, but missionary ambitions (religious and cultural), and, most important of all, control of the peoples and of the Islamic revival in the area, are a part of the strategic commitment. The heartlands of Islam, the direction of daily prayers for millions of Muslims and the focus of the annual pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah, could, if managed for the sake of the Muslim *umma*, unify and organise the efforts and resources of all the disparate Islamic revival movements world-wide. The political potential of this region is therefore immense and the Western powers are only too well aware of this.

As noted above, it is a matter of open knowledge that the

[15] See 'Abd al-Malik al-Tamīmī, Al-Tabshīr fī-Mantiqat al-*khalij al-'Arabī* (Missionary activities in the Arab Gulf area), Kuwait 1982, pp.48ff.

[16] See John Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West*, London, 1990, p.504.

Americans and the British have *permanent* military bases in each of the countries of the Gulf except Yaman. Kuwait, Bahrain, the Emirates, Oman, Qatar, each have at least one significant American military installation. Saudi Arabia is host to several military bases which are huge complexes cut off from the rest of the country and run quite independently of it.

Who is responsible for the presence of the *kuffār* in the holy lands of Islam? Evidently, those who invited them, the rulers of these countries, and the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* who authorised their invitation. The authorisation was given publicly in a formal document (called the Makkah Document) on the 10th October, 1990. Among the signatories were Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Shaikh Bin Baz, and Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān. The argument of these *'Ulamā'* was based mainly on an appeal to *necessity* whereby that which is nominally forbidden may be *temporarily* permitted, or whereby one may be *temporarily* excused from doing what is normally obligatory. The argument of necessity is plainly meaningless or unprincipled if the temporary allowance becomes permanent. But leaving that aside, let us look closely at the argument of necessity as it was used in this case. The necessity in question was, of course, the threat of invasion and war from Iraq under Saddam Hussain.

We can begin by asking: who convinced the Saudis that this threat existed? Of course, the Americans. They claim to have shown the Saudi authorities secret pictures of Iraqi troop movements, taken by secretly operated satellites, pictures whose interpretation requires very specialised training which is also secret. In short, the Saudis took the Americans' word for it: they did what they were told. (Iraq invaded Iran also, we may recall; there was no similar response, not from the West nor from the Gulf Arab states, nor from the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān*.) In fact, there is no evidence of any immediate threat to Saudi Arabia. The moment for the Iraqis to invade, had they had any intention of doing so, would have been immediately after the occupation of Kuwait, or, at the least, well before the 'allies' had time to establish themselves in Saudi Arabia. In the end - surely a unique event in military history - the Americans enjoyed six full months of a totally unopposed landing. Even

assuming criminal intention on the part of Saddam Hussain (not a difficult assumption to make), one would have supposed that he must quickly attack and occupy the oil-fields in the north-east of Saudi Arabia, a perfectly realistic option in the first month of the crisis, and hold them in order to bargain for Kuwait. But the Iraqis made no such move.

We begin by noting, therefore, that the necessity to which the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* appealed was not correctly judged: they had only the word of the *kuffār* that any such necessity existed. But let us allow that this was an error of judgement on their part, not a wilful attempt to legitimise the demolition of Iraq. Let us allow that they had no wish to help the enemies of Islam kill huge numbers of Muslims by long-range air and missile bombardment, to so thoroughly destroy the roads, bridges and utilities of Iraq as to cause many hundreds of thousands of deaths for years to come. Let us allow that they did not foresee or wish any of this to happen. They saw it as a necessity that Saudi Arabia should be defended. Very well. But events have unfolded. We know what did happen, what was done to Iraq and to its people. The whole world knows. It was televised night after night. Have the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* expressed some sorrow or regret for the loss of so many human lives? Have they no cause to unwish what they did? Evidently not, for these learned men have remained quite silent on the sufferings of the Iraqi people; nor, now that the necessity exists no more, have they had anything to say on the continuing military presence of the Americans and the British and the French in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Yet, even if we accord to these scholars the best of motives for what they did, it cannot make what they did right. They are obliged, insofar as they are *Muslim* scholars, to give advice and judgement according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. They did not do so. Their judgement was, by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, false judgement, a grave surrender of their responsibility in favour of a slavish submission to what the Saudi government needed; certainly, their silence about it ever since is an unqualified evil.

The conditions and principles to be taken into account when a Muslim government, in any situation of necessity or otherwise, solicits or accepts the help of non-Muslims, are well-established and well-known.

Before the battle of Badr, a man came to the Prophet, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam,* and said that he wanted to join him in the fighting. The Prophet asked him if he believed in Allah. The man said he did not. The Prophet then said to him: 'Go back [or go away]. I will not call on the help of a *mushrik*.' And who does not know what the odds were that the Muslims *face* at that time? (This *ḥadīth* is in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim.)

At the time of 'Uḥud, as is recorded in the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām,[17] the Prophet did not wish, again despite the circumstances, to seek the help of the Jews in Madīnah. He said, *ṣalla-llāhu 'alaihi wa sallam:* 'We do not call for the help of a *mushrik* against a *mushrik*, nor of a *kāfir* against a *kāfir*.'

There are two precedents in particular which the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* offered as pretexts for the judgement that they gave. First they cite the case of Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah at the time of the battle of Ḥunayn. The Prophet borrowed from this Ṣafwān certain weapons even though he was, at that time, a *mushrik*. But borrowing or buying weapons or any other equipment or technology from unbelievers is not the same thing as calling on them to fight with you. Also, the Muslims certainly had the upper hand and were in full control of the affair - the incident referred to occurred after the conquest of Makkah. Finally, it is important to remember that Ṣafwān was known to be sympathetic to Islam and, indeed, soon afterwards became a Muslim. The contrast with the Gulf War is all too obvious: the Arabs did not have the upper hand and were certainly not, in any sense, in control of the affair. The reverse is true. The war was conducted by and for the Americans under the leadership, on the field of battle, of General Schwarzkopf who is not, and was not, in the least bit sympathetic to Islam. The situation is directly contradictory to what is required of the Muslims and promised to them in the Qur'ān, a verse I quoted earlier (see above, p.33): *...Allah will not give the unbelievers any [right of] way over the believers* (*an-Nisā'*, 4.141).

Secondly, the *'Ulamā' as-Sulṭān* cite the precedent of the *hijra* to Abyssinia where the Muslims put themselves under the

17 *As-Sīratu n-Nabawiyyah*, Cairo, n.d., vol.3, p.64.

protection of the Negus, the Christian ruler of that country. But this was not a situation involving fighting and war and, again, the Negus was not only sympathetic to the beliefs and cause of the Muslims but himself accepted Islam. The Prophet himself, *ṣalla-llahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, did the funeral prayer for the Negus when news of that noble man's death reached him. (The incident is reported in the *Ṣaḥiḥ* of Muslim.) The help that the emigrant Muslims received from the non-Muslim Christians of Abyssinia was not of a military nature, not a part or phase of a military campaign.

In sum, there is no permissible alliance in fighting between Muslims and non-Muslims. (That it may have happened in the later periods of Muslim history does not make it permissible since these periods of history have no value except as negative precedents, teaching us what not to do.) The reason that the Muslims do not fight alongside the *kuffār* is that they have altogether different aims - one springing from *'īmān*, the other from *kufr*. And about this reason there cannot be the slightest dispute - it is given in the Qur'ān (*an-Nisā'*, 4.76): *Those who believe do battle for the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols...* The Prophet, *ṣalla-llahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was asked in regard to people fighting to get booty or a reputation for bravery or for various other reasons: 'Who is fighting *fī sabīl-Allah* (in the way of Allah).?' The Prophet said: 'Whoever fights to cause the word of Allah to be the highest, he is fighting *fī sabīl-Allah*'. (*This ḥadīth* is recorded in all major collections; in the version in Muslim's *Ṣaḥiḥ*, among the reasons not acceptable are *al-ḥamiyyah al-jāhiliyyah* (pagan tribal pride) and *riyā'* (vainglory, pretension).)

All the *kuffār*, whether of the ex-Communist East or the ex-Christian/Jewish West, fight for the wrong reasons - for control of populations (labour resources) and raw materials, for national glory, for arrogant dominion, or for the love of violence, the excitement of defeating others and displaying massive force - like the Pharaohs and all other tyrants throughout history. None of their purposes can ever be *fī sabīl-Allah*. It follows that there can never be a purpose common to believing Muslims and unbelievers which might lead Muslims to fight alongside and/or under the direction of non-Muslims.

II

The nature of the alliance between the *kuffār* of the West and the rulers of Saudi Arabia has, according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, three defining characteristics:

1 that the alliance constitutes a joining of forces between the *kuffār* and the *Munāfiqūn*, the unbelievers and the hypocrites. The *Munāfiqūn* are those who pretend to rule according to Islam but in reality have an alliance with the *kuffār* by which they are maintained in prestige, power and privilege. It is an historical fact that the power of the Saudi royal family was established by the British who paid King 'Abdul 'Azīz regular salary and surrounded him with 'advisers and helpers', notably the notorious British spy, John Philby. Such an alliance and collaboration is indicated in the Qur'ān: *Convey to the hypocrites the news that for them there is a painful doom - those who choose unbelievers for their allies instead of believers! Do they look for Power at their hands when surely all power belongs to Allah?* (*an-Nisā'*, 4.138-9)

2 that their relationship is not one of equals but of master and servant. The psychology of willing servitude to human masters is such that, inevitably, the servants do more to ingratiate themselves with their masters, more even than is asked, becoming ever more eager to please. In the end, they not only betray their religion, their nation, but little by little acquire the habit of vilifying both religion and nation by word and deed, and lose all sense of judgement and decency until, in the case of the Saudi princes and princesses, they have become the source of contempt in the world.

3 that there is a powerful tendency for the wrong-doers and the corrupt to be attracted to one another so that they flock, supporting each other in their wrong-doing and corruption. This condition is described in the Qur'ān: *Now We have set you on a clear road of authority, so follow it, and do not*

follow the caprices ('ahwā') of those who do not know. Surely they can do nothing to help you with Allah; and surely the wrong-doers, they are allies of each other, whereas Allah is the ally of those who have taqwā (al-Jāthiyah, 45.18-19).

The corruption of the rulers of Saudi Arabia has four major attributes. Firstly, their rule is dynastic, in a fashion very similar to that of the Umayyads: they have appointed for themselves the worst of advisors, and go far beyond the Umayyads in favouring members of their own family. The injustice and illegitimacy of their government is such that they can trust no one else and so are obliged to trust the least trustworthy in their kingdom, themselves. (One American official is reputed to have remarked that the Gulf States were the only countries he knew of where it was considered unremarkable that all senior and junior ministers should have the same surname.) The purpose of this favouritism is not to exploit the special talents or patriotism of a particular family, but simply to retain all wealth and power of patronage within one group, like a family business. The Western powers, having engineered this situation, are, naturally, very content with it. It enables them to control, through the privileged family, the wealth and resources of the whole nation. The tyranny of the Saudis is described in the West as a force for moderation and stability. But anyone who has lived there knows that the Saudis' government is a *ḥukm al-Jāhiliyyah;* it is very far removed indeed from having any Islamic character.

Secondly, there is no *shūrā* or consultation in the Saudis' government, nor any justice. Their rule is based on strict policing and coercion, on massive bribery, and on the 'protection' of the *kuffār*. Violation of even minimal human rights is widespread - the Shi'a minority (who are the majority in the main oil-producing region of the country) have been continually victimised for years with many well-documented cases of brutal tortures and killings. More recently, there was the case of the expulsion of more than 600,000 Yamanis for no fault of their own, but simply because the Yamani government had refused to support the *kuffār* in their war against Iraq.

Thirdly, the Saudis have consistently followed the policies, both domestic and foreign, dictated to them by the Americans, even when these policies are obviously anti-Islamic. For example, the Saudis gave support to Islamic movements when these were judged by the Americans to weaken the forces of Arab nationalism. Then, when the Americans judged that the danger to their interests was from the Islamic movements, the Saudis switched their support to the Arab nationalists, now regarded as 'moderates'. This is precisely what has happened in Algeria. Again, in Sudan, now that that Islamic movement has become established there, the Saudis have been instructed to support the animist/Christian rebels in the south of that country against the Muslims, and they are doing so. Similarly, as the battle lines become clearer, the Saudis have been advised to give *visible* support to the cause of 'peace in the region' which is a euphemism for supporting the Israelis who, able to cope with Arabs fighting as nationalists, are unable to cope with the resistance of Arabs fighting as Muslims.

Finally, we cannot but charge the Saudi rulers with ingratitude to Allah, which is a stage in *kufr*. For Allah has given them enormous wealth, and the power and influence that go with it, to use on behalf of the Muslims in the region and on behalf of world-wide betterment. Their attitude is quite the contrary to this. The terrible fate which awaits such rulers and their helpers is assured by Allah in His Book in the following verses:

Allah coins this likeness [analogy]: a township [community] enjoying security and stability, its provision reaching to it abundantly and from every side, but ungrateful for Allah's favours, so Allah made [them] taste of hunger and of fear - because of [the evil of] what they had been doing.

(*an-Naḥl*, 16.112)

And when We decide to destroy a township [community] We send command to its people who live luxuriously, but they [go on] living immorally therein, and so the work [of doom] had effect for them, and We destroy them utterly.

(*al-'Isrā'*, 17.16)

Do they think that, because We have provided them with wealth and sons, We hasten to them with good things? No, but they do not perceive.
(*al-Muʾminūn*, 22.55-6)

Then, when they forgot that of which they had been reminded, We opened to them the gates of all [good] things until, even as they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and they were dumb struck!

Thus, of the people who did wrong, were the last remnant cut off... (*al-ʾAnʿām*, 6.44-5)

CHAPTER 4

VILIFICATION OF THE LEADERS OF THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL BY THE MUSLIM AGENTS OF THE ORIENTALISTS

The Qurʾān has explained very fully how *'those whose hearts are sickened'* weave and wander about, forgetting that their innermost thoughts and plans cannot be hidden from Allah; how they plot and compose their purposes with the purposes of the enemies of Islam. How too, as sense and judgement recede from them, they imagine themselves to be able and worthy in what they plot and do, and how, at first a little, then entirely, they run with a blind eagerness toward what is hateful to Allah and away from what is pleasing to Him. By the Qurʾān's own assurance, we can say with certainty that their works will prove in vain, and not those whom they revile in order to earn the patronage of the *kuffār*:

Surely those who turn back after the guidance has been expounded to them are seduced by Satan and it is he who controls them.

That is because they say to those who hate what Allah has revealed: 'We will obey you in some matters'. And Allah knows their secret deliberations. How then when the angels gather them, striking their faces and backs! That will be because they followed after what angers Allah and because they hated what pleases Him. On account of that, He has made their actions in vain.

Do those whose hearts are sickened suppose that Allah will not bring to light their hatred? (*Muḥammad*, 47.22-9)

The sort of hypocritical Muslims there described really do imagine that they obey the unbelievers only in certain matters, not in all matters. In this way, they strive to deceive themselves and so make palatable to themselves betrayals which are unpalatable. A part of this futile self-delusion is their willingness, under the guidance of the unbelievers, to offend

and revile those Muslim scholars who have given their lives to a clear-sighted, frank presentation of the guidance of the Qur'ān without fear of the opinions or power of the forces of unbelief. But, the friends and supporters of the unbelievers, careless of the wrath of Allah, have sought to call blind those who see clearly. By way of illustration, I will, in this brief chapter, refute the attempts by Ja'afar Sheikh Idris - who is a consultant editor of the Oxford Centres *Journal of Islamic Studies* - to defame Shahīd Sayyid Qutb.

I do not claim and no one of the *'Āhl as-Sunnah* would claim, any sort of infallibility for any Muslim scholar, however great. No scholar is absolutely beyond or above criticism. This principle is one that would apply to Sayyid Qutb and would, of course, be supported and endorsed by him. The decisive statement of this principle, usually attributed to the great *'Ālim* of Madīnah, 'Imām Mālik, is that from the judgement of any Muslim scholar, the Muslims may accept something and they may reject something. The only exception is for judgements that come from the Prophet himself, *ṣalla-llahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, who is infallible. That point being clearly understood, I would nevertheless wish to emphasise in what high regard Shahīd Sayyid Qutb is held by all Muslims on account of all that he did for Islam and for the *umma*. We call him Shahīd because he gave his life for Islam, and Allah has said in His Book how greatly believers of that quality are esteemed: *...And those who are slain in the way of Allah - He does not make their actions vain or futile. He will guide them and improve their station, and enter them in the Paradise which He made known to them* (*Muḥammad*, 47.4-6). The sacrifice of Sayyid Qutb is not rendered in vain, nor will his stature be diminished in the eyes of true believers, however hard the enemies of Islam (or those Muslims who take sides with them) may try to vilify his name or his cause. He himself commented on the verse, translation of which was just quoted, as follows:

> Their actions will not prove in vain because those actions are guided by and connected with the Truth from which they [the actions] descended and for whose protection they were initiated. Their works [on the path of Allah] will be everlasting because the Truth is Everlasting and It cannot be in vain.'[18]

No fair-minded person will deny that the Shahīd's *tafsīr* (his commentary on the Qur'ān entitled: *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān: In the Shades of the Qur'ān*) especially the extracts from it, collected and published as *Ma'ālim fī al-Ṭarīq* (*Milestones*), have been profoundly influential on the Muslims of the modern age. In particular, this brief work has been greatly appreciated by the young in the Islamic revival movements all over the world - indeed, they use it as a standard text for study and guidance. It is also a well-known fact that Sayyid Qutb paid his life as the price of this book. He was sentenced to death at the time of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir mainly as a result of the publication of *Milestones*. But his death did not, as the enemies of the movement hoped, in any way diminish the popularity or influence of the book. On the contrary, the book became even more influential and more popular. In an important sense, the death of Sayyid Qutb did not silence the voice of Sayyid Qutb.

Therefore, his enemies have resorted to another method of trying to silence him . They have tried to defame and vilify the man and his work. It is deeply regrettable, though unsurprising, that this line of attack should have come not from the hands of Jews or Christians, but from Muslims working with them. One such attack is in the form of a paper by Ja'afar Sheikh Idris, entitled *Qaḍiyyatu l-manhaj 'inda Sayyid Qutb fi Ma'ālim fī al-tarīq* ('The issue of method in Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*'). The paper was given in a colloquium in Bahrain whose proceedings (papers and discussions) were subsequently published in Riyad in 1987 as *Nadwatu ittijāhāt al-Fikr al-Islamī al-Mu'āṣir* (Trends in contemporary Islamic thought).[19]

The paper contains two principal arguments against Sayyid Qutb:

First, the argument that Sayyid Qutb projects Islam as an ideal religion in a way that cannot be implemented practically by any Muslim community. Idris writes:

> As for the Muslim community, Sayyid Qutb believes that the ideal is that which is mentioned in

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18 *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān,*, 12th edn, Beirut, 1986, vol.6, p.3287.

19 Maktabu t-tarbiyati l-'arabī li-duwal al-khalīj, Riyad, 1408 AH, pp.529ff.

> the Qur'ān and that that is the only form [of Islam]. Anything less than that is not Islam. Therefore, Sayyid Qutb has caused the Muslim youth to become attached to an ideal form which they cannot attain. Also he has presented to them a picture of the Muslim community or of its political order (*ḥukm*), which has influenced many people, anything less than that is not Islamic. (p.564)

Idris refers to the fact that Sayyid Qutb was influenced on this point by al-Mawdūdī, the Muslim scholar mainly active in India and Pakistan, and maintains that whereas al-Mawdūdī (having learnt from experience) modified his position on this idealism, Sayyid Qutb did not. Sayyid Qutb was influenced in particular by al-Mawdūdī's essay on 'The Process of Islamic Revolution'.[20] Idris argues that because al-Mawdūdī actually led an Islamic movement and had 'real' contacts with 'real' people, he changed his mind. Sayyid Qutb, according to Idris, did not have that experience of people in everyday real life. To illustrate the idealism and alleged irreality of Sayyid Qutb's position, Idris quotes a part of the following from *Milestones*:

> In [the Muslim] society, the beliefs and ideas of individuals, their devotional acts and religious observances, and their social system and their laws, are all based on submission to God alone. If this attitude is eliminated from any of these aspects, the whole of Islam is eliminated, as the first pillar of Islam - that is the declaration, 'There is no deity except God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God' - becomes eliminated.
>
> Thus, and only thus, can this group become a Muslim group and the community which it organises be Muslim. Before adopting this purity of attitude no group can be a Muslim group, and before organising its system of life on this principle no society can be a Muslim society. The reason for this is that the first principle on which Islam is based, that is, *la ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun rasul Allah*, is not established

[20] Islamic Publications Ltd, Lahore, 1947, repr. 1977.

> with respect to both its parts. [21]

Such is a Muslim community, according to Sayyid Qutb, a community defined by its faith in Allah and whose character is expressed in the unity of faith, worship and Sharī'ah. And Sharī'ah includes, for Sayyid Qutb, not only laws but also values, culture and civilisation:

> In the Islamic concept, the sovereignty of God means not merely that one should derive all legal injunctions from God and judge according to these injunctions; in Islam the meaning of 'Sharī'ah' is not limited to mere legal injunctions, but includes the principles of administration, its system and its modes. This narrow meaning (i.e. that the Sharī'ah is limited to legal injunctions) does not apply to the Sharī'ah nor does it correspond to the Islamic concept. By the 'Sharī'ah of God' is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationship, and principles of knowledge.
>
> The Sharī'ah includes the Islamic beliefs and concepts and their implications concerning the attributes of God, the nature of the universe, what is seen and unseen in it, the nature of life, what is apparent and what is hidden in it, and the interrelationships among these. Similarly, it includes political, social and economic affairs and their principles, with the intent that they reflect complete submission to God alone. It also includes legal matters (this is what is today referred to as 'the Sharī'ah', while the true meaning of the Sharī'ah of Islam is entirely different). It deals with the morals, manners, values and standards of the society, according to which persons, actions and events are measured. It also deals with all aspects of knowledge and principles of art and science. In all these

[21] *Milestones*, International Islamic Federation of Students Organisations n.d., Saimiyah, Kuwait, pp.114-15.

(cont. next page)

guidance from God is needed, just as it is needed in legal matters.[22]

If a community lacks any one of these, it cannot be considered a Muslim community. According to Idris, this is too idealistic to be implemented. But if this definition of Sayyid Qutb's really is taken from Qur'ān and Sunnah, it must be valid on those grounds. Would Idris want to call a community 'Muslim' which lacked a commitment to any one of these three elements - faith, worship, Sharī'ah? Or is it that he desires a 'realistic' community which is committed to less than that, which tends towards what people have actually become, to what they actually do, and not to what they should become, to what they should be doing?

The 'realism' which Idris finds wanting in Sayyid Qutb is to be found in abundance in the 'flexibilities' of societies modelled and patterned upon the mythologies and ideologies of the European Enlightenment. 'Flexibility', precisely, is what the 'secularists' and so-called 'progressives' are called upon to ask the Muslims to show, so that Islam may be adapted to the 'ethos of the twentieth century'. And it is precisely that - actual Muslim communities adapted to the ethos of the West's myths and values - which Sayyid Qutb calls *Jāhiliyyah*:

> If we look at the sources and foundations of modern ways of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in *Jāhiliyyah* (ignorance of the Divine guidance), and all the marvellous material comforts and high-level inventions do not diminish this ignorance. This *Jāhiliyyah* is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth. It transfers to man one of the greatest attributes of God, namely sovereignty, and makes some men lords over others. It is now not in that simple and primitive form of the ancient *Jāhiliyyah*, but takes the form of claiming that the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behaviour, and to choose any way of life rests with men, without regard to what God has prescribed. The result of this rebellion against the

[22] *Milestones*, pp.157-8.

> authority of God is the oppression of His creatures. Thus the humiliation of the common man under the Communist systems and the exploitation of nations and individuals due to greed for wealth and imperialism under the Capitalist systems are but a corollary of rebellion against God's authority and the denial of the dignity of man given to him by God.[23]

The Islamic way of life is both ideal and realistic in various senses: it can be historically implemented; it is adapted to human nature, for, as the Qur'ān tells us, (*al-Mulk*, 67.14) *Does He not know whom He created?*; it has the necessary stability and adaptability to fit in every time and place, since it was intended for creatures who live on this earth, who are as transient as it is, as conditioned and perishable.

Idris wilfully misunderstands the implication of Sayyid Qutb's argument to be that a society that does not satisfy the ideal criteria is therefore a community *of kuffār*, of unbelievers. Idris argues that this is the position that some of the followers of Sayyid Qutb have taken (pp.542-3). The reasoning here accuses Sayyid Qutb, by implication, of *Takfīr*, that is, of calling believers unbelievers. This accusation is a falsehood and a slander. To describe the ethos and values under which Muslims are obliged to carry on the business of their lives as *Jāhilī* is not to call any individual Muslim *kāfir*; similarly, to describe any form of government or any particular government policy as *Jāhilī* is not to call any individual Muslim *kāfir*. If it were, no Muslim (past or present) could ever criticise the actions and policies of other Muslim as unIslamic. This would mean that every Muslim scholar must practise a cloistered silence, knowing but not proclaiming what is right, knowing but not condemning what is wrong. Such a position - being a background moral presence, being a moral *subject*, but never entering upon the foreground of human affairs, never being a moral *agent* - belongs to the post-Enlightenment Christian ethos. It has no colour of Islam in it. The Muslims, men and women, are explicitly commanded in the Qur'ān to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, which means direct participation in

[23] *Milestones*, p.13

political, social and moral affairs of concern to the Muslim community. In fact, therefore, what Idris is alleging against Sayyid Qutb is not *Takfīr*. Sayyid Qutb was aware of this possibility and was studiously careful to avoid it all his life - as confirmed to me in conversation by his brother, Muhammad Qutb. Rather, Idris is accusing him of the 'crime' of having a Muslim conscience instead of a Western-Christian one.

Idris's point about the influence of al-Mawdūdī is true. But it is wholly untrue that (a) al-Mawdūdī somehow changed his mind about what an Islamic community is, and (b) that Sayyid Qutb failed to change his mind because he lacked any experience of involvement in actual human affairs. There is no evidence that al-Mawdūdī changed his mind; Idris merely asserts that he did without producing any evidence of any kind that would show how or in what ways al-Mawdūdī's views came to be modified.

Equally untrue is the claim that Sayyid Qutb was some sort of dreaming, literary solitary, living in and for his books. Sayyid Qutb lived with people; fiery and actively committed to the Islamic revival movement, and he became the leader of that movement. If his work were so entirely theoretical and abstractly idealistic, the Egyptian authorities would hardly have needed to imprison him and then, finally, having no other sanction in their power, murder him.

Idris's second major argument against Sayyid Qutb is even more weakly founded. It is a variation of the former, claiming that, because of his background as a man of letters, he does not mean what he says or that what he says is not meant to be acted upon. Idris writes:

> I think the problem of Sayyid Qutb is that his early studies were in literary criticism, a field in which one is allowed to speak imprecisely to say whatever words one pleases because there is nothing therein on which action has to be taken. Qutb is only interested in the flavour [or taste] of the literary text in front of him, for he was neither jurist (*faqīh*), nor philosopher, nor logician, nor law-maker (*qānūni*). Such were his early studies - therefore, I caution you against taking his words at face value. (p.565)

As for Sayyid Qutb's being a man of letters, a literary critic, that is, of course, one of the qualifications needed to understand and appreciate the Qur'ān, and it has always been recognised as such. To claim that what he wrote was never intended to be acted upon is plain falsehood. Neither his life nor his words give the least support to such a claim:

> They of the first generation [of Muslims] did not approach the Qur'ān for the purpose of acquiring culture and information, nor for the purpose of taste and enjoyment. None of them came to the Qur'ān to increase his sum total of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself or to solve some scientific or legal problem or to remove some defect in his understanding. He rather turned to the Qur'ān to find out what the Almighty Creator had prescribed for him and for the group in which he lived: for his life and for the life of the group. He approached it to act on what he heard immediately, as a soldier on today's battlefield reads 'Today's Bulletin' so that he may know what is to be done. He did not read many verses of the Qur'ān in one session, as he understood that this would lay an unbearable burden of duties and responsibilities on his shoulders. At most he would read ten verses, memorise them, and then act upon them. We know this from a tradition reported by ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd.
>
> This understanding - the understanding that instruction is for action - opened the doors to spiritual fulfilment and to knowledge. If they had read the Qur'ān only for the sake of discussion, learning and information, these doors would not have opened. Moreover, action became easy, the weight of responsibilities became light, and the Qur'ān became a part of their personalities, mingling with their lives and characters so that they became living examples of faith - a faith not hidden in intellects or books, but expressing itself in a dynamic movement which changed conditions and events and the course of life.
>
> Indeed, this Qur'ān does not open its treasures

except to him who accepts it with this spirit: the spirit of knowing with the intention of acting upon it. It did not come to be a book of intellectual content, or a book of literature, or to be considered as a book of stories or history, although it has all these. It came to become a way of life, a way dedicated to God. Thus, God Most High imparted it to them in a gradual manner, to be read at intervals:

We have revealed this Qur'ān little by little so that you may recite it to people at intervals, and We have revealed it gradually (*al-'Isrā'*, 17.106).[24]

Is that the argument of one who reads in the Qur'ān for merely literary pleasure? No; he longed with all his being for the implementation of the Qur'ān, and gave his whole life for that purpose.

The claim that he was not a *faqīh* is also false. There is the whole of his *tafsīr* on the verses of the Qur'ān with explicit legal connotations as evidence to the contrary. Indeed, Sayyid Qutb showed these commentaries to, and discussed them with, Sheikh 'Abū Zahrah, a well-known *'Ālim* and a leading authority on *fiqh* in Egypt at that time. It is important to reiterate that Sayyid Qutb was not content with merely expounding the legal connotations of the Qur'ān, he wanted its implementation as a whole - we refer the reader back to his definition of the Sharī'ah.

Finally, the claim that he was no 'philosopher' is also false. He was not a philosopher in the modern Western sense of a professional academic who treated specific questions designated as 'philosophical' by the profession. But he was a great Muslim thinker who addressed his intellectual energy to the analysis and explication of Islamic concepts of current concern to the *umma*. The competence and cogency, often brilliance, of his analyses have been widely recognised. Idris, had he wished to acknowledge it, could have found examples enough even in the brief extracts from the *tafsīr* published in *Milestones*. There are two points I wish to stress, however, in regard to this point. First, that Sayyid Qutb's thinking was vigorously *relevant*,

[24] *Milestones*, pp.21-3.

rather than 'academic' in the modern Western sense. He commended study and research not for their own sake, but for the sake of properly informed and wisely directed action:

> We must return to [the study of the Qur'ān] with a sense of instruction for obedience and action, and not for academic discussion and enjoyment. We should return to it to find out what kind of person it wants us to be, and then be like that. During this process, we will also discover the artistic beauty in the Qur'ān, the marvellous tales in the Qur'ān, the scenes of the Day of Judgement in the Qur'ān, and all other such benefits which are sought in the Qur'ān by academic and literary people. We will enjoy all these other aspects, but these are not the main object of our study.[25]

Second, Sayyid Qutb makes the important and necessary distinction between Islamic learning and non-Islamic learning. All learning must be returned by Muslims to the fountainhead of their religion, the Qur'ān and Sunnah, so that these sources, as teachers, have the first and last word on what is taught and learnt. In any case, Muslims may not take their religion from non-Muslim sources:

> It is necessary for a Muslim... to return to the guidance of God in order to learn the Islamic concept of life - on his own, if possible, or otherwise to seek knowledge from a God-fearing Muslim whose piety and faith are reliable....
>
> No doubt Islam permits a Muslim to learn chemistry, physics, astronomy, medicine, technology and agriculture, administration and similar technical sciences from a non-Muslim or from a Muslim who is not pious - *and, this under the condition that no God-fearing Muslim scientists are available to teach these sciences*. This is the situation which exists now, because Muslims have drifted away from their religion and their way of life and have forgotten that Islam appointed them vicegerents of God and made

[25] *Milestones*, p.27.

them responsible for learning all the sciences and developing various capabilities to fulfil this high position which God has granted them. But Islam does not permit Muslims to learn the principles of their faith, the implications of their concepts, the interpretations of the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, the Prophet - peace be on him - the philosophy of history, the traditions of their society, the constitution of their government, the form of their politics, and similar branches of knowledge, from non-Islamic sources, nor from anyone other than a pious Muslim whose faith and religious knowledge is known to be reliable.

The person who is writing these lines has spent forty years of his life in reading books and in research in almost all aspects of human knowledge. He specialised in some branches of knowledge and he studied others due to personal interest. Then he turned to the fountain-head of his faith. He came to feel that whatever he had read so far was as nothing in comparison to what he found here. He does not regret spending forty years of his life in the pursuit of these sciences, because he came to know the nature of *Jāhiliyyah*, its deviations, its errors and its ignorance, as well as its pomp and noise, its arrogant and boastful claims. Finally, he was convinced that a Muslim cannot combine these two sources - the source of Divine guidance and the source of *Jāhiliyyah* - for his education.[26]

It is certain that Idris's unprincipled attack on one of the greatest leaders of the contemporary Islamic revival is part of the well-established, wide-ranging Orientalist/Western programme of stifling that revival and extinguishing its light. But the revival of Islam continues despite all the resources of prestige and power at the disposal of the unbelievers and their collaborators, despite all their cunning, despite all the malice and envy of their evil souls. And their failure is promised by Allah in His Book:

[26] *Milestones*, pp.164-6 (emphasis added).

They want to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light however much the unbelievers may detest [it].
(*as-Ṣaff*, 61.8)

CONCLUSION

It should now be clear to any Muslim reader that the aim of these new centres of Orientalist study of Islam are pernicious, and incurably so. It is no good hoping that, in time, with longer and still more patient surrender to the perspectives and purposes of secularists and missionaries, somehow Islam will finally come to be tolerated in the Western world. It will not. It is no good hoping that because, as patron of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies', Prince Charles, the future head of the Church of England, has stood in the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford University[27] to appeal for mutual understanding between 'Islam and the West', that with this a new era of mutual understanding has really been ushered in. Far from it. All that is likely, if we learn anything from the history of the past or from present realities, is that Muslims will be required to accommodate themselves economically, politically, socially *and* morally, to the norms which the West perceives it necessary to maintain for the preservation of its dominance in the world.

The first duty of Muslims is to find out what threatens the *umma,* how the threat is managed, what its dimensions and resources are. I have, *insha' Allah,* gone some way towards that in this book. However, it does not suffice to only *know* what is wrong, and feel badly about it. It is a part of Muslim conscience to take the next necessary steps - to proclaim and publish that which is wrong so that people are widely informed of the danger that surrounds them, and the will begins to form in the community to do something about it. Any Muslim who reads this book and, after due consideration, agrees with the general tenor of its argument, is duty-bound as a Muslim to inform other Muslims, in particular imams, scholars, teachers

[27] These words were written before the Prince gave his Oxford lecture (October 27th, 1993).

and students and any others who have influence in the community. More than that, a Muslim reader is bound to make the effort to be persuasive; that is to persist in the task of proclaiming and informing.

The further duty is to put right that which is wrong. In this case, that means sitting down with like-minded Muslims to discuss, and then establish, ways of getting the appropriate education to Muslims, of giving them access to Islamic perspectives on Islamic history and civilisation. Large funds, prestige and power will be denied to any Muslim who try to do this. That much can be anticipated with confidence. However, in most countries Muslims are free to organise *informally* in small circles, to learn the Qur'ān and Sunnah, to invite informed speakers, and to read in Islamic history. Such humble programmes, intelligently and patiently followed through - not simply begun and then let drop at the first or second hurdle - could eventually lead, as Allah wills, to the establishment of an informal institution for higher learning which by intelligent association with recognised Muslim institutions in Muslim countries could begin to function as a formal, reliable route for the training of Muslim scholars of the future. This is a way that requires much sacrifice - especially for the young. It can be difficult to turn down the attractions of prestige and financial reward that Western academic institutions can offer to Muslim scholars who will fit in with them. But Muslims able to make such sacrifices must be found if the pernicious influence of this new breed of Orientalist centres, partly staffed by Muslim collaborators and partly funded by nominally Muslim governments, is to be countered effectively.

The Qur'ān has warned quite unequivocally about the intentions of the People of the Book:

> *Many of the People of the Book want to make you unbelievers after you have believed, through the envy from their own selves, and after the truth has been made clear to them* (al-Baqarah, 2.109)
>
> *And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor will the Christians, until you follow their religion. Say: 'Surely, the guidance from Allah is the [only right] guidance.' And if you follow their desires after*

the knowledge which has come to you, then you will find in Allah no protecting ally or helper.
(*al-Baqarah*, 2.120)

But Allah has also said in His Book that the believers should not be intimidated by the apparent power of the enemies of Islam nor by their seeming to be so united in their opposition to Islam. They seek to wage war and destruction from positions they think are impregnable. In reality, they are weak and divided amongst themselves and their modes of thinking lack true discernment:

They will not fight against you in a body save in well-fortified places or from behind walls. Their enmity amongst themselves is very great. You think of them as a unified body whereas their hearts are at odds [with one another]. That is because they are people who lack intelligence.
(*al-Ḥashr*, 59.14)

The circumstances in which believers presently find themselves, the odds against them, enemies within and without - all these are tests and proofs of the quality of belief. For it is not sufficient for believers to claim, 'We believe', and then suppose that that claim would not be put to the test:

Do people imagine that they will be left [to live in ease] because they say 'We believe', and will not be tested with hardship?
(*al-ʿAnkabūt*, 29.2)

wa l-ḥamdu li-llāhi rabbi l-ʿālamīn

APPENDIX

UPDATE MAY, 1994

Supporters of the Oxford Centre for 'Islamic Studies', and of the general policy of facilitating collaboration between Muslim scholars and Orientalists and missionaries, have been promoted to influential positions in Saudi Arabia. By contrast, those who have had the courage to speak out against Saudi policy, especially against Saudi Government violations of human rights, were dismissed from their posts and/or arrested and imprisoned. A few specific examples:

1 ʿAbdullāh Naseef: promoted by King Fahd to the post of Deputy Chairman of the *majlis ash-Shūrā*, the so-called consultative assembly.
2 ʿAbdullāh al-Turkī: promoted to Minister of the newly-created Ministry of Islamic Affairs. (He recently held a conference in London for *Daʿwah*, in which papers were delivered encouraging collaboration with Orientalists.)

But:

3 Dr. Safar al-Ḥawālī, formerly Head of ʿAqīdah Department of ʾUmm al-Qurā University, and author of a long, published letter to Shaikh Bin Baz, in which he objects to the occupation of the holy lands by the *kuffār*, was deprived of his passport, dismissed from his post and imprisoned.
4 Arrested and imprisoned:
Dr Ahmad Tuwaijrī, Professor of Education at the King Saud University.
Dr ʿAbdul ʿAziz al-Wuhaibī, Professor of Physics at the King Saud University.
Dr Saʿd al-Faqīh, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Medicine at the King Saud University.
Dr Muḥsin al-ʿAwājī, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Agriculture, at the King Saud University.
Dr Ṣāliḥ al-Wuhaibī, Lecturer in Literature at the King Saud University.
5 Dismissed from their posts, their telephones and faxes cut,

their work stopped for forming the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights under the Sharī'ah:
Dr Muhammad al-Mas'arī, Professor of Physics, at the King Saud University, and the CDLR spokesman, who is now seeking political asylum in Britain (see p. 42 f.n.12).
Shaikh 'Abdullāh al-Mas'arī, his father, a retired judge and former head of the Board of Complaints (*Dīwān al-Maẓālim*).
Dr 'Abdullāh al-Ḥāmid, Professor at the Imam University, Riyad, a university dedicated to Islamic studies.
Dr 'Abdullāh al-Tuwaijrī, Professor at the Imam University, Riyad.
Ḥamad al-Ṣulayfīḥ, senior officer in the Ministry of Education.
Shaikh 'Abdullāh al-Jibrin, senior member, under Shaikh Bin Baz, of the administration of research and *fatwā*.
Sulaymān al-Rashūdī, a lawyer whose office was shut down, preventing him from working.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

***Translated extract from* Report of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights, 1993: Saudi Arabia**

...and Dr Ahmad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ghorab has had his contract at King Saud University terminated because of his views on Orientalists and Islam, and his opposition to the Saudi authorities' encouragement of the establishment of Orientalist centres for the study of Islam. He was expelled from the Kingdom. Also, his two daughters [students] were expelled from the University.

It is a precondition [in Saudi Arabia] for giving a lecture or holding a seminar [or symposium] to have permission from the three following authorities:
1 the local district governor;
2 the general head of the administration of research and *fatwā* [i.e. Shaikh Bin Baz];
3 the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs.

The University regulations oblige every member of staff to avoid becoming involved in political discussions. A secret circular was issued to all vice-chancellors to prohibit any discussion of the attitude of Saudi Arabia towards the Madrid Peace Conference and its relationship with Israel.

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SUBVERTING ISLAM:

The Role of Orientalist Centres

Dr. Ahmad Ghorab

An impassioned defense of the Muslim Cause and Muslim Faith by a former teacher at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, who had his contract with the University terminated because of his views.

This is a 'powder-keg' issue in our controversial era.

Dr. Ahmad Ghorab is a specialist in Islamic Studies. He is a graduate of Cairo University and has a Ph.D. in Islamic philosophy from Oxford University. He taught in various universities including Oxford, Cairo, Kano (Nigeria), the Islamic University of Constantine (Algeria) and King Saud University.

His published works, in Arabic and English, include a critical edition and study of a unique manuscript on comparative religion by the Muslim philosopher Abu al-Hasan al Amiri, the Islamic viewpoint of orientalism, Human Character in the light of the Qur'an, Islam and science, Contemporary Islamic Revival, the Qur'anic Reasoning and the Islamic Concept of Culture.